



PS3
PlayStation 3

PSP
PlayStation Portable

PS VITA
PlayStation Vita

PlayStation Network

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 77 JANUARY 2013
100% Australian Content

TEAR INTO

2013

48 GAMES YOU
CAN'T MISS!

GTA V
THE LAST OF US
METAL GEAR SOLID:
GROUND ZEROES
GOD OF WAR:
ASCENSION
BIOSHOCK INFINITE
AND MORE!

8 PAGE REVEAL!

DEAD SPACE 3

"We're aiming for quadruple A"
EA's shocking sequel sized-up!

02 EXCLUSIVE!

NI NO KUNI

Can Studio Ghibli save
JRPGs? Our must-read
final verdict!

40
FUNNIEST
AUS FAILURES
IN GAMING
EXPOSED!



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PRO TIPS ON SMASHING EVERY BLACK OPS II STRIKE FORCE MISSION!

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THE WORLD IS IN PLAY.

PG

Mild violence, themes
and coarse language,
Gaming experience
may change online



PS3

PlayStation-3



PlayStation
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FEATURE

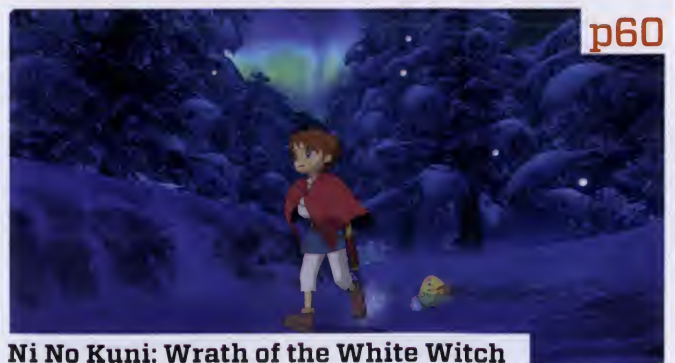
Dead Space 3

Madness, co-op and a doomed ice planet. But is it survival horror?

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Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch



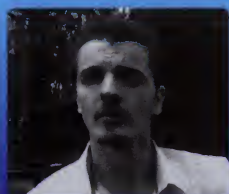
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Far Cry 3



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Jetpack Joyride



OPINION

Game on

Martin Gladstone knows games are violent, but it's the emotional moments that matter **p24**.



OPINION

Frameless

Angry Sackboy likes videogame movies, but wonders where this medium's opus is **p22**.

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Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

Studio Ghibli's first PS3 game attempts to jumpstart JRPGs

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Meet the team

**Paul Taylor****Deputy Editor**

Still thinking about my favourite games over the year. It's been pretty packed – time to look at the trophies!

Playing: *Far Cry 3*

Wanting: *GRID 2*

**Stephanie Goh****Art Director**

Demolished Connor's adventure over a hazy, lazy long weekend. Good, but not great.

Playing: *AC III*

Wanting: *GTA V*

**Dan Staines****Contributor**

Everyone talks about graphics, but what about music? What's the next step in the audio evolution?

Playing: *Far Cry 3*

Wanting: *Ni No Kuni*

**James Cottee****Contributor**

The original *Deadly Premonition* was mental. Here's hoping the remake doesn't 'go turbo' on us.

Playing: *Borderlands 2*

Wanting: *DP: TDC*

**James Ellis****Contributor**

I'm training up to break the Guinness World Record for *Hustle Kings*.

Playing: *Borderlands 2*

Wanting: *Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes*

**Nathan Lawrence****Contributor**

Accidentally stumbled on a new genre: "horromance". Lovers give up their hearts... literally.

Playing: *Hitman: Absolution*

Wanting: *Tomb Raider*

**Dave Kozicki****Contributor**

Reliving the gorgeous *Okami* in HD retaking the cursed earth as cherry blossoms fall. The sun goddess lives!

Playing: *Far Cry 3*

Wanting: *Fuse*

**Toby McCasker****Contributor**

I hate all racers except *Motorstorm*. Oh my god is it normal to yell this much when playing a game?

Playing: *Motorstorm*

Wanting: *Tales of Xillia*

**Angry Sackboy****Contributor**

Mining Twitter for ideas and feedback. Sometimes feels like I'm shouting into a narcissistic hipster void.

Playing: *PS All-Stars BR*

Wanting: *MGS: GZ*

Editorial




The 'press start' screen is gaming's useless appendix and we need to cut it out. It's another hurdle keeping you and I from the good stuff, even after we've been bombarded with an install, a health warning, and six company logos we couldn't care less about – no matter how much Pixar was paid to animate them.

Pressing start to play is, of course, a throwback to the coin-operated arcades of yesteryear. It was a necessary

function that told the machine, yes, you were done pumping all your Ritalin money into the coin slot. You were now positioned at the controls, ready to be robbed blind after only 11.6 seconds of gameplay.

'Press start' then appeared on the title screens of early console games as a means of luring in potential customers. You see, there were once shops that provided demos of new releases on in-store TVs, thereby allowing you to make more informed decisions. (Sounds like crazy talk, I know, but bear with me.) These press start screens worked in conjunction with a time-delay demo reel, an antiquated feature that's wasted in modern shops who strive for 100 per cent shelving space.

Nowadays the title screen can't even be trusted to fulfil its last useful purpose: to be a litmus test for the galactically stupid. Press  at a 'press start' screen today and the game will go "meh, close enough" and hand you your cookie.

That's like having a door that opens for people who turn the knob or try to hump it like a dumbass. Why even bother having it there? In a perfect world, pressing anything but start should detonate your PS3 and take you out of the gene pool.

Life's short, fellow gamers, and title screens are just holding us back as a species. I'm a realist: logo splashes and patch updates are never going to go away, but developers can press stop on press start anytime they want.


Adam Mathew**Editor**

Playing: *Ni No Kuni; WotWW*

Wanting: *The Last of Us*

SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins a prize! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? Love? Wrong. A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotchets? No. Please stop abusing our rhetorical system.

The answer we were looking for is: an *OPS* subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic.

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Editorial & Design

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STEP INTO AN ANIMATED
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Ni no Kuni

WRATH OF THE WHITE WITCH



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PG

Mild themes,
violence and
simulated
gambling



PS3

PlayStation 3



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LEVEL 5



スタジオジブリ作品
STUDIO GHIBLI



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Governments got game

Australia finally ready to support the gaming industry

The Australian video games industry is set to enjoy a \$20 million boost from the government over the next three years. Arts minister Simon Crean, who announced the funding, said the grants will support a wide range of platforms.

"It's an incredible start and as the minister said on the day he announced it, that's a down payment, it's the future," says Tony Reed, CEO of the Game Developers Association of Australia.

Don't expect Aussie developed games to boom overnight though. A consultation period will ensue where Screen Australia will work in unison with the industry to manage where the funds will be spent.

"It's definitely about structured growth... to have an organic, really slow and prepared growth

as opposed to just trying to leap on board with the rest of the world," says Reed.

Starting in December the consultation will be looking for creative ideas, with Simon emphasising he wants to see the money invested in "something innovative."

"This is to do with independent developers taking a few chances and creating really interesting new content. He doesn't want to see a repeat of what's going on in other territories," Reed explains.

Canada experienced a huge boom in videogame development in the late 90's when the government supported the industry with tax incentives. Since then Ubisoft Montreal has gone on to create the *Assassin's Creed* series, employing nearly 2000 people and generating



hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. Another studio, EA Canada, is responsible for most of the *Need for Speed* franchise and houses over 2000 employees.

With a bit of luck Australia can see the same success. Our games industry has suffered significant losses over recent years as the dollar continues to intimidate overseas markets, despite the strength of our local retail sector. Last year we spent \$1.5 billion on videogame retail with 92% of the population owning a gaming device.

Currently our largest gaming studios tend to focus on non-console platforms. Mobile phone game-makers IronMonkey and Firemint studios recently merged to become Firemonkeys, Australia's biggest

video game developer. And infamous *L.A. Noire* developers Team Bondi went defunct last year after allegations of poor working conditions. The team is now working with KMM Interactive Productions (*Happy Feet 2*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*) chipping away at their next project, *Whore of the Orient*.

3AW radio host Neil Mitchell described the funding as 'welfare for nerds.' "And what sort of games are we talking about? Are we talking about 'go out and shoot people' type games?" he blustered.

SIGH. Yes, Neil, that's exactly what we're talking about – because all videogames are about killing people. You've got us so well pegged. **Martin Gladstone**

In Short

A brief look at this month's news



► **Bioware would like your opinion: should *Mass Effect 4* be a sequel or a prequel?** "Parsing through your thoughts on the next [*Mass Effect*] game," tweeted series producer Casey Hudson recently. "Would you be more interested in a game that takes place before the trilogy, or after?" We don't have strong opinions either way, but if you do, why not jump on Twitter and make them heard? Who knows – maybe Bioware will like your ideas so much they'll hire you as a game designer! (Just kidding. That will never, ever happen.)

► ***BioShock Infinite* will not include multiplayer, lead designer Ken Levine has confirmed.** Multiplayer modes previously announced, including a four-player spec ops mode and a weird tower defence thing, have been cut – presumably so that the team at Irrational can concentrate on polishing the single-player portion of the game.

► ***007 Legends* developer Eurocom has been gutted by redundancies.** "Eurocom are undertaking a restructuring which I regret to say has meant we've made the majority of our workforce redundant," said studio director Hugh Binns in a statement. A pity. *Legends* may have been utter cack, but it's always a shame to see people lose their jobs.

► ***Call of Duty: Black Ops II* earned more money in twenty four hours than any other *Call of Duty* game, says publisher Activision.** As a consequence, lifetime earnings for the *CoD* franchise now exceed the box office totals for *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*.

► ***The Dark Knight Rises* and *Inception* star Tom Hardy has been cast as Sam Fisher in the upcoming film adaptation of Ubisoft's *Splinter Cell* series.** Penned by *The International* scribe Eric Warren Singer, the film is currently in pre-production and is due for release in late 2013.

► **EA bossman John Riccitiello has called for a global games rating system.** "With great freedom, comes great responsibility," he told games blog Polygon. "To live up to that responsibility, [we] must adopt a self-regulated, global rating system across every format games are played on." Huh. Good luck with that, John.

► **IO Interactive has revealed that responsibility for future instalments of its popular *Hitman* franchise will be split across two developers.** "It's like with Treyarch and Infinity Ward [on *Call of Duty*]," *Hitman: Absolution* director Tore Blystad explained.

► ***Beyond Good and Evil 2* has been delayed because series mastermind Michel Ancel has been too busy making *Rayman* games,** Ubisoft boss Yves Guillemot has revealed. The long-awaited sequel is still very much in development, he says, but remains on hold until Ancel is free to dedicate himself to it once more.

► **A tattooist is suing THQ for replicating his work without consent.** The ink in question appears on the torso of fighter Carlos Conti in *UFC Undisputed 3*. Apparently, having the rights to use someone's likeness doesn't give you permission to use their tattoos as well. Who'd have thought?

INTERVIEW



Small games, big ideas



Vlambeer are a two-man studio from the Netherlands. **Rami Ismail** and **Jan Willem Nijman** have made games on mobile platforms, but their award-winning *Super Crate Box* helped launch PlayStation Mobile.

Tell us about yourself and your team: who are you and what type of games do you make?

We started in 2010 after dropping out of college and have been making games that would best be described as 'arcade' ever since. On the bright side, we've been in the indie spotlight for the past two years, releasing almost 14 games. On the downside, every game we make gets cloned by some morally bankrupt studio that just slaps on Angry Bird-art.

What's the biggest surprise in making a PlayStation game that works across multiple platforms?

The biggest surprise was definitely that the Playstation Mobile development toolkit took care of most of that. We just made sure the controls worked and the SDK made sure they're visual on mobile devices and physical on the Vita. We were also surprised to find out that performance issues were very real and really needed testing, though. Some minor pieces of

code would kill the Vita's framerate but not affect the Xperia Play while something else would cause slowdown on the Xperia S but not on the Vita. It took some testing to get that right.

Why did you pick PlayStation Mobile as platform to make games for?

We didn't. It was an opportunity that arose when Sony Europe offered us a launch title spot for the platform, and although we usually don't like to work with people, we decided it'd be fun to be a 'launch title' for once and see whether that's worth the time and effort. We hired some people to help us with the extremely tight deadline, got the game done in time for launch and the result is now playable on Playstation Mobile. We were definitely extremely impressed by Sony's way of dealing with us – our contacts really felt passionate about the project, and made sure everything we needed was arranged.

What advice can you give to someone who's thinking about making a PS Mobile title?

A good first step is to make any game in the easiest tool available to you,



whether that's Game Maker or Unity or if you're a programmer, any programming language. Making games is not so much a purely technical challenge – it requires experience with design, art and audio to make a good game, not in the least the experience to detect certain pitfalls and mistakes and avoid them. Get your game-making up to speed then start worrying about earning money off of it.

What's your next game going to be, and why will it be the best PS Mobile or minis title yet?

We're looking to see if our upcoming 2D airplane combat game *LUFTRAUSERS* might make it to Playstation in some form. The reception we've seen from gamers has been extremely positive.

“every game we make gets cloned by some **morally bankrupt studio**”

OPS VAULT DECEMBER

2004 ▶

Driver 3 (or *Driv3r*) honestly promised so much on paper which we now take for granted in open world games. Cars, bikes, boats, trucks, guns and a big playground to do whatever you liked in. The heritage was sound and revered, and we were gaga over what it promised us. Elsewhere we looked at games that you could play online with your PS2 (*Medal of Honor: Rising Sun* was a highlight), and the “shockingly violent, blackly humorous” *Manhunt* got 8 out of 10.



2007 ▶

Crikey, a racing game on the cover. It was the very first review of the PS3's launch title, *Ridge Racer 7*, and we devoted eight pages and a worthy 9 out of 10 score to the flagship arcade title. Right after that, *Tony Hawk* was showing its age in *Project 8* (7 out of 10, “Forget cool, this is a cash cow,”) and up the front we wrote a love letter to future classic *Okami* in our preview, as we were wowed by its art style and clever linking themes. The “harrowing” *God Hand* earned 8 out of 10.



2011 ▶

Probably one of our most favourite issues (they're all our favourites, reader), despite cover-game *Syndicate* being refused classification the day the issue went on sale. We went through the best co-op games available at the time on PS3 (most of these still stand), and we also took a deep breath and dove into PlayStation Home. The results were not what we expected. Elsewhere, *Jurassic Park: The Game* got 4 out of 10. Blech!



THE ULTIMATE BATTLE BEGINS

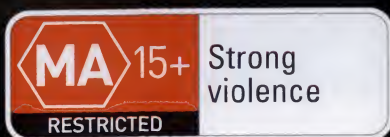
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Constantin Film



SCREEN GEMS



THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!



Jan 9

Madagascar 3

Alex, Marty, Gloria, Melman and everyone's favourite penguins are back journeying through Europe in a circus. Full of laughs and poo-throwing monkeys this is a Blu-ray worth owning.



Jan 10

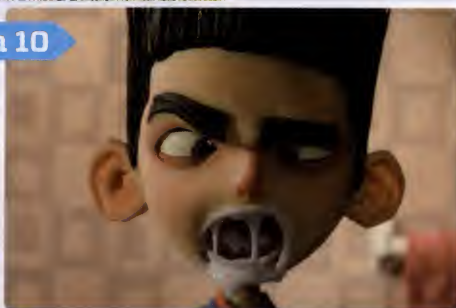
Resident Evil 5

With the T-virus threatening the world again Alice (Milla Jovovich) is left fighting for survival while she chases down those responsible. *Retribution* is pumped full of Jovovich's behind in tight pants.

Jan 10

ParaNorman

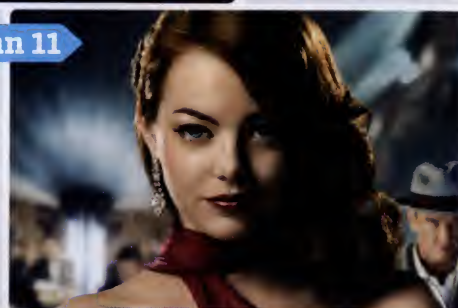
No it's not a spoof of the *Paranormal Activity* series, though we secretly wish it was. Young ghost whisperer Norman must save his little town from a zombie attack, as you do.



Jan 11

Gangster Squad

A late 1940's gangster film with Sean Penn, Ryan Gosling and Josh Brolin on board. *Zombieland* director Ruben Fleischer takes the wheel so expect decent things. Then again he is responsible for *30 Minutes or Less*.



Jan 15



DmC Devil May Cry

A reinvention of the series with Dante sporting a new haircut. This time we get to explore the demon hunter's earlier years. Word on the street is it's the most brutal *DmC* to date. Boom!

Jan 16



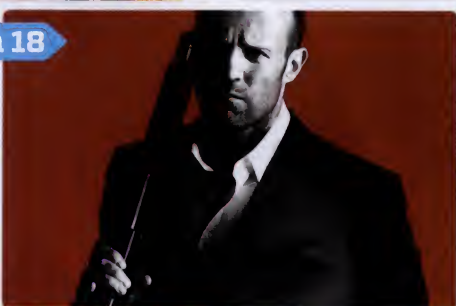
The Watch

Ben Stiller, Vince Vaughn and Jonah Hill are forced by their eventless lives to form a neighbourhood watch. As they discover their community is full of extra-terrestrial, we mean terrestrial, imposters they must play the hero and save the world... from testicles, sorry terrestrials. We'll stop now.

Jan 18

Parker

Heist gone wrong. Check. Smoking hot female leads. Check. English action hero. Check. Yep, it's another adrenalin filled Jason Statham flick. You weren't actually expecting someone else, were you?



Jan 18-28



Big Day Out

You totally know what this is already. Here's the line up: Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Killers, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Vampire Weekend, Kaskade, and much, much more!

Jan 24



Django Unchained

Set in the American South during the Civil War, Jamie Foxx plays a slave promised with freedom for capturing the Brittle brothers dead or alive. If you're not already interested we've got two words for you, Quentin Tarantino.

Can't miss...

Ni No Kuni

JANUARY 24

More than a year after its release in Japan, Australian gamers can finally get their sweaty hands on this charming gem. With incredible visuals, a beautiful narrative and a battle system that improves on the best of the *Final Fantasy* series thank god it's making it to our shores.



THE WORLD IS IN PLAY.



Mild supernatural themes and violence

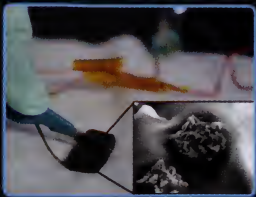


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Around the World

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in tech and gaming



FANTASTIC PLASTIC

STANFORD, USA

Much to the delight of clods everywhere, a team of scientists from Stanford University has created a self-repairing plastic polymer that conducts electricity – ideal for LCDs and capacitive touchscreens. Imagine a world where a scratched smartphone display fixes itself in minutes, a world where trendy oafs can mistreat their expensive iGadgets with impunity, safe in the knowledge that science has their back. Sounds rad, right? Well don't bin your kid gloves just yet: this wonderous material is still in R&D and years away from commercialisation. Nuts.



CARMUNICATION

TOKYO, JAPAN

Last month it was glow-in-the-dark 'smart highways' from the Netherlands making our roads safer. This month? Chatty 'smart cars' from Japan. Currently in testing at Toyota's Intelligent Transport System Site near Mt Fuji, these astute autos communicate with special roadside transmitters and other smart cars to detect and respond to common obstacles and hazards, including pedestrians, red lights, and blind spots. According to Toyota officials, the technology will be ready for testing on Japanese roads in 2014, with the US following soon after.



WORK EXPERIENCE

BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

A 21-year-old student has leveraged his expertise at *Football Manager* to land a job managing a real Azerbaijani Premier League team. Initially hired as a lowly advisor, Vugar Huseynzade – an Azerbaijan native studying in Sweden – was quickly promoted to manager of Baku FK's reserve squad after impressing the club's owner with knowledge and know-how gleaned from playing Sega's popular soccer management sim. "I've always wanted to work in football and have played *Football Manager* since 2002," Huseynzade told Scandinavian newspaper Aftonbladet.



LIKE A FOX

N. CAROLINA, USA

Engineers at North Carolina State University have discovered a way to boost performance of congested Wi-Fi networks by an astonishing 700%. And the best thing? It's entirely software based, meaning it could be deployed over existing Wi-Fi networks without the need for costly hardware upgrades. Once installed on a wireless access point, the software – called WiFox – monitors network conditions and periodically prioritises outgoing traffic to clear out the backlog, increase throughput and lower latency. The result? Faster Wi-Fi for all.



GOOD RIDDANCE

AUSTRALIA

The Federal Government has announced that it will no longer pursue its controversial – some might say moronic – plan to introduce mandatory internet filtering in Australia. Originally conceived in 2007, the plan would have compelled ISPs to block access to websites deemed "objectionable" by the powers that be. This naturally provoked vigorous opposition from industry experts and civil rights activists concerned that the system would be costly, ineffective, and ripe for abuse. Now, five years on, the government has finally – finally! – taken notice. Thank goodness.

INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

EUROPE



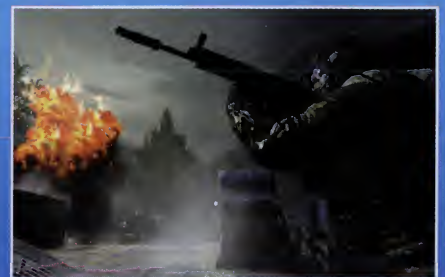
- 1 **Call of Duty: Black Ops II** Activision
- 2 **Assassin's Creed III** Ubisoft
- 3 **FIFA 13** EA
- 4 **Need for Speed Most Wanted** EA
- 5 **Gran Turismo 5** Sony

JAPAN



- 1 **Assassin's Creed III** Ubisoft
- 2 **Medal of Honor: Warfighter** EA
- 3 **Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires** Take-Two
- 4 **Need for Speed Most Wanted** EA
- 5 **Pro Evolution Soccer 2013** Konami

USA



- 1 **Call of Duty: Black Ops II** Activision
- 2 **Assassin's Creed III** Ubisoft
- 3 **Zone of the Enders HD Collection** Konami
- 4 **Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception** Sony
- 5 **LEGO The Lord of the Rings** Warner Bros

► INFOCUS

Destiny

You're currently drooling at the concept art of a 2013, multi-platform title made by Bungie, ex-custodians of the *Halo* franchise. A leaked design document points heavily toward it being a shooter/MMO, and also gives us some plot points: "Our story begins seven hundred years from now in the Last City on Earth, in a Solar System littered with the ruins of man's Golden Age. A massive, mysterious alien ship hangs overhead like a second Moon. No one knows what it's here for. Meanwhile, strange, alien monsters creep in from the edge of the universe, determined to invade. We are young 'knights' tasked with defending humanity, discovering the source of these monsters and – eventually – overcoming it."



In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"We feel really close and attached to veterans. We've heard a lot of these stories, and what they go through. How they're traumatized by what they've done. I wanted to tell that story."

Treyarch Head of Story **Dave Anthony**, on working closely with bonafide SEAL members.



"TimeSplitters 4 was in the very early stages of development when Free Radical went into administration."

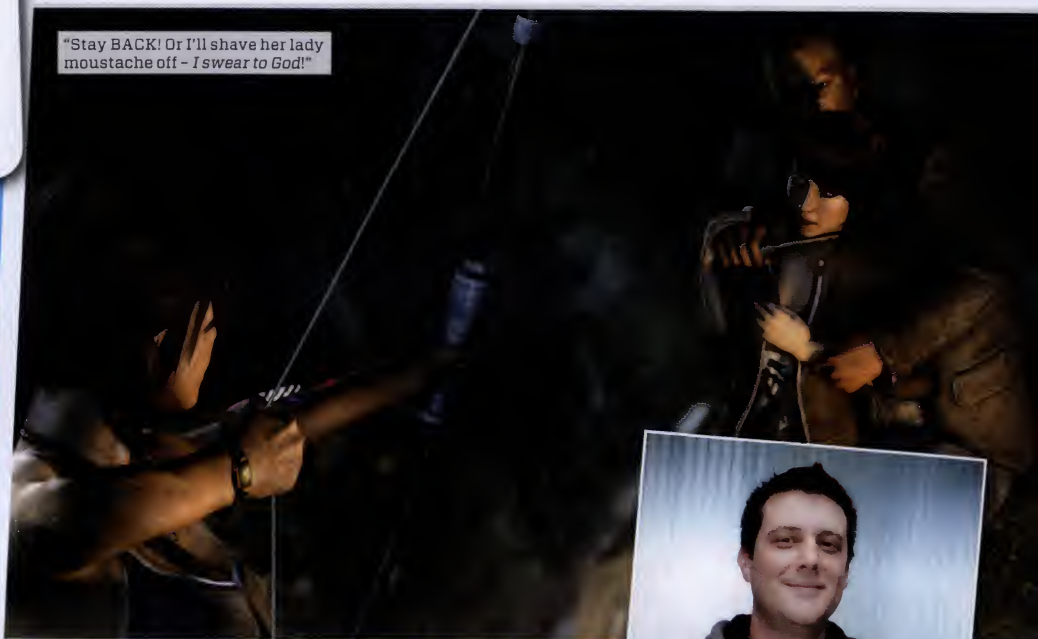
Ex-Free Radical **Steve Ellis**, on how his attempts to get a (much wanted) sequel published were hindered, both by the studio's final project, *Haze*, and marketing teams.



"We need new consoles and at the end of the cycle generally the market goes down because there are less new IPs, new properties, so that damaged the industry a little bit."

Ubisoft CEO **Yves Guillemot** says he doesn't want to wait another seven years for the next generation of hardware

"Stay BACK! Or I'll shave her lady moustache off - I swear to God!"



► INTERVIEW

ABOUT LARA'S BINGLE

Hooked by our last big bite of *Tomb Raider* we hunted down **Noah Hughes**, Game Director, for some juicy info..

OPS: What are the challenges with making a game that's quite a bit broader than the *Uncharted* series? For example, in the more explorative hub areas, how do you find the balance between offering 'traversal clues' while avoiding the appearance of hand-holding?

Noah Hughes: We've aimed to create a real and credible environment, so where a path is barred it makes sense: the rocks are too difficult to scale, or foliage too dense to cut through, rubble too heavy to shift, things of that nature.

Hopefully the majority of the visual clues work within the environment without breaking up the fiction too badly, or becoming a distraction: ledges you can latch onto have lighter edges, whereas those you can't grab look appropriately jagged, or uneven for example. The secondary tomb that you saw in the preview build is relatively well sign-posted, as it's the first of its type and we want people to know to look out for them - but later on you'll need to do more exploring to find their hidden locations.

It's a balance: we do a good deal of play testing sessions to observe where people get confused or lost. We're still tweaking the instinct mode, for example - so the version you saw in the preview build, though nearly there, may change slightly.

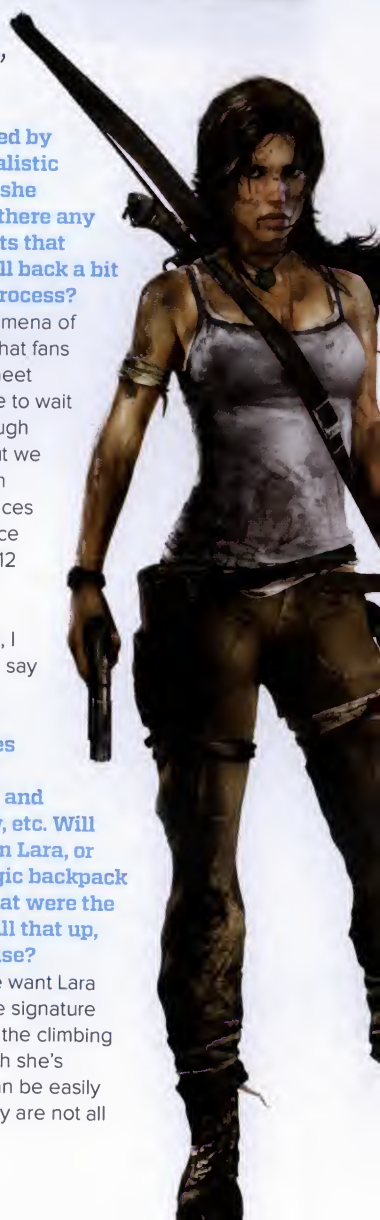
OPS: Speaking of difficulty, Lara has died in many, many gruesome ways over the years, but the impact of those

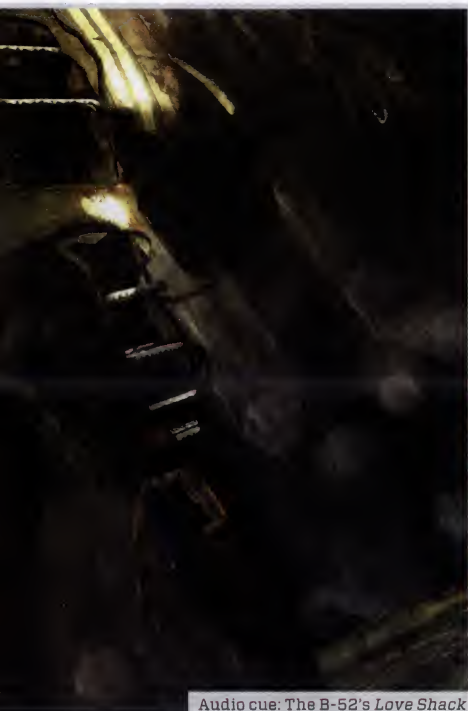
moments were lessened by her less-than-photorealistic appearance. Now that she looks so lifelike, were there any wince-worthy moments that caused you guys to pull back a bit during the tweaking process?

NH: It's one of the phenomena of the *Tomb Raider* games that fans seem to expect Lara to meet painful deaths. You'll have to wait and see as you play through the final build yourself, but we definitely have a few "turn away and cringe" sequences in the game. The sequence we showed during E3 2012 had some pretty horrific scenes where she finds herself impaled on debris, I don't think it's a spoiler to say that these are still there!

OPS: As Lara progresses she seems to find and keep quite a lot of gear and tools - like an axe, bow, etc. Will these be represented on Lara, or have you gone the magic backpack route. If the former, what were the challenges of rigging all that up, animation/clipping-wise?

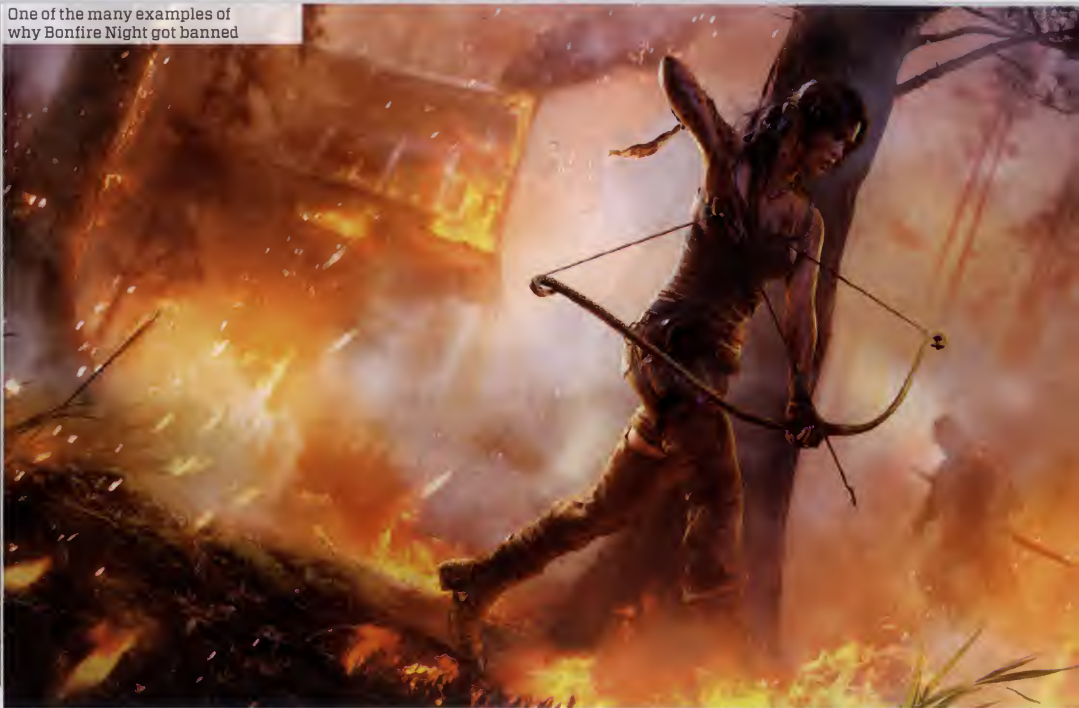
NH: It's a slight hybrid: we want Lara to be equipped with some signature items at all times, such as the climbing axe. Other pickups, though she's carrying them and they can be easily accessed by toggling, they are not all





Audio cue: The B-52's Love Shack

One of the many examples of why Bonfire Night got banned



visually represented on her body at the same time if they occupy a single space on her person – the bow, the shotgun, and so on. As with everything we're trying to achieve, be that Lara's design, gameplay, environment – we're trying to make a plausible and credible experience for the player: but it's an action adventure story – not a simulation and we don't want to encumber the play unnecessarily by being 100% literal.

OPS: All credit to you, Lara looks hyper-real and quite an emotive actress this time around. What techniques have you used to achieve this feat?

NH: We simultaneously motion captured the cut scenes and audio performances with actors on hand in an LA studio, which we think strongly helps with performance and realism. For facial expressions we've done a lot of hand animation, helped by video reference taken during the mocap sessions. We felt we were capturing emotion and expression better this way.

We undertook a painstaking search for the voice of Lara, Camilla Luddington, but simply kept coming back to her as being the best person to represent Lara's voice. A young Brit herself, she had an ability to really convey what Lara is experiencing as she lives life on the island.

OPS: As Lara's abilities increase and she becomes more empowered, is that shedding of her vulnerability reflected in her in-game body language/animations?

NH: Yes, though as you'll see as the story develops this is the story of Lara's growth: right through to the end of the game we will see Lara become braver and more determined in the face of what the island throws at her: the range of emotions she experiences are reflected in her character.

OPS: Not to bring up past unpleasantness, but there was some controversy regarding Lara and an indecent proposal by another survivor. Without knowing the full context of the scene, or having played a single minute of the game, you had people jumping onto their soapboxes to judge your work. Do these sorts of not-even-half-informed detractors end up shaping the game in any way? Or do you stick to your vision?

NH: We believe very strongly in our vision, and I am on record stating that we have not made any changes as a result of the controversy. We hope that as more and more people experience Lara's origins story for themselves and understand the full context of her situation on the island that they will come to understand our intention. We wanted to show that action equals character, and that this is a story about Lara's bravery in the face of adversity, not vulnerability.

OPS: How much research did you do on the Dragon's Triangle/ Devil's Sea? Just how bizarre a place is it?

NH: We wanted to choose a myth that

"I am on record stating that we have not made any changes as a result of the controversy."

people could Google and find out more about: the Himiko story is quite well known in Japan, but less so amongst Western cultures – where we have our own myths and legends. The Dragon's Triangle, too is a real phenomena, akin to the Bermuda Triangle. I was lucky enough to make my way out to Japan to explore locations for inspiration; I came back with 1000s of photos for visual reference. As for Yamatai – you'll have to wait and see, we don't want to spoil it for you guys! 🐉



Camilla Luddington: the lovely voice of Lara



Warning: Direwolves and corpses ahead

TOP TEN

Nightclubs

Sick of paying overpriced cover charges? Not got the right shoes? Want to drink to your heart's content without the hangover? Then come join us as we look at the 10 best drinking-holes on your PlayStation...



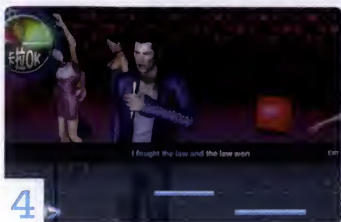
Grand Theft Auto IV

The *Ballad of Gay Tony* add-on put you in the shoes of lovable nightclub manager, Luis. Between mini-games involving champagne drink-offs, and ejecting drunk and aggressive patrons, you could hit the dance floor and grind with attractive CGI ladies. Signature tune: Miike Snow's 'Animal'.



Just Cause 2

There's barely an issue where we don't mention the strip-club zeppelin. When a nightclub is held up by two airborne blimps thousands of metres in the sky you can expect it to be slightly over the top. Gun-wielding bartenders and hotties ahoy!



Sleeping Dogs

After busting out some karaoke classics from Air Supply and the Clash, Wei finds himself bullet-timing and bone-cracking some unwanted guests. And who can forget drowning bodies in that giant fish-tank? Party on, Wei!



Mass Effect 3

Heavy dance beats echo throughout Purgatory, the biggest intergalactic 'breeding ground' for fatigued and war-torn soldiers. Why does it rock? Shephard gets a booty dance, or if you prefer it, some down time with Steve Cortez.



Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Themed on a honey bee hive, serving cocktails that improve your health, and staffed with robotic arms, this is *Deus Ex* through and through. Pity you don't get to whoop some bouncer-arse though.



Ratchet & Clank

Forget having to trek your way to a nightclub, the duo's groovitron device created the same atmosphere wherever you were, forcing enemies to bust moves uncontrollably. Yes it was ridiculous, but it was ridiculous fun.



Max Payne 3

You know the drill. Guys rock up to a multi-level nightclub with beanies and machine guns. Bouncer nods at the dress code. Bouncer gets a bullet to the head. Max, drowning himself with booze has to save the day using stripper booths as cover.



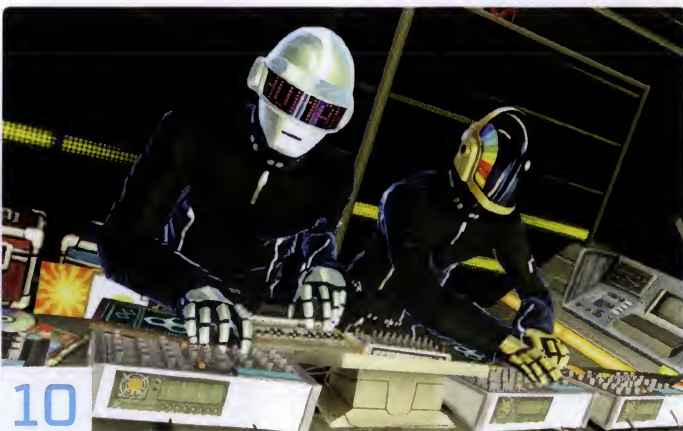
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion

More an inn than an eclectic nightclub, the Bloated Float nevertheless holds an Orcish bouncer. If it's security you're after you really can't go wrong with an orc, better than a pansy elf at least.



Call of Duty: Black Ops II

In the middle of an enormous, floating playground is a nightclub called Solar. Remarkably it's packed with hundreds of people (soon to be 'innocent civilians') even in the middle of the day. Awesome tech.



DJ Hero 2

No, we're totally not cheating here even though this is all there is to the game. Anyway, *DJ Hero 2*'s nightclubs are perhaps the best in games ever. Why? You have some of the greatest tunes being mashed together by geniuses of the genre, like deadmau5 and Daft Punk. No one's going to spill mojitos on your shirt. It's a good time, all the time. It wins.

► INFOCUS

Aliens: Colonial Marines

Did you know *Aliens: Colonial Marines* has been in development since 2006? Crazy, right? Ordinarily, such a long development cycle would be cause for concern, but in this case just the opposite is true.

Colonial Marines is a labour of love, and love can't be hurried. Gearbox, whose dedication to the source material borders on the pathological, is taking its sweet time because it knows that everything has to be just so. This is canon, after all. Care is warranted.

So yes, the wait has been long, and sometimes arduous, but we're confident it'll all be worth it come launch day. Until then – stay frosty.



► IN REALITY

Audio Logs

Voice recordings are far from a convenient method of communication. Audio diaries are far less popular than text and video blogs, and even on our phones we're more likely to send a text message than leave a voice message. An estimated 11 billion text messages were sent in Australia during 2011 alone, and while data on calls is less reliable, what we have suggests that they're made far less often.

And yet plenty of game characters seem to make a voice recording of every conversation or thought they've ever had, before errantly scattering those recordings around the place for the protagonist to discover in conveniently digestible chunks. We won't listen to the voice messages left on our phones, but we'll happily let Dr Steinman's mad rants play in the background as we explore *BioShock's* Rapture. Audio recording became popular after 1878 when Thomas Edison perfected the phonograph, and while that ties in nicely with the retro aesthetic of games like *Dishonoured*, but why are we still encountering audio logs in game worlds where videos would make so much more sense?

From a functional standpoint, the reason is simple — most games characters are extremely active, and audio logs can often be enjoyed without needing to stop. Issac Clarke didn't put on the same weight that we did over winter because he didn't stop



"Hello? Jane? I know you're there. Pick up the phone. I need my cyanide capsules back..."

every five minutes to sit down and watch a Youtube clip of top scientists uncovering the thrilling secrets of the necromorphs, and even Batman can't watch a video of Killer Croc's interrogation in the middle of a brawl.

The equivalents here in the real world are podcasts and audio books, which are rarely as 'spontaneous' as the (actually heavily scripted) audio logs we encounter in games. But their purpose is the same — to give us something to listen to while we're doing something else. Podcasting is definitely on the rise, with some analysts positing that the practice will eventually be as popular as blogging; *The Ricky Gervais Show* alone had enjoyed more than 300 million downloads as of March 2011.

Beyond that, audio logs are simply a convenient way for games to express the human desire to be recorded, archived and remembered. As of February 2011, there were an estimated 156 million blogs online, and that number is always on the rise. Facebook now has over one billion active users every single month. People have always wanted to be heard, to build a legacy that echoes on beyond their death — and, of course, a lot of audio logs in games seem to conveniently capture the moment of the unfortunate recorder's death. While audio logs themselves may seem a little redundant in most game worlds, the function they serve is one we can see reflected in our own lives. **James O'Connor**

Voices of History

If you're ever in the area, head to the British Library and check out the Treasures of the British Library collection for some early, fascinating voice recordings of famous figures. Particularly relevant is Florence Nightingale's recording from 1890: "When I am no longer even a memory, just a name, I hope my voice may perpetuate the great work of my life." It also features Queen Victoria, Thomas Edison, Houdini, and many more.

► NUMBER CRUNCHING

► The number, in millions, of PS3s sold worldwide to date. To put that in perspective, that's approximately three PS3s sold for every person in Australia.

70

121



▲ Number of consecutive hours crazy person Okan Kaya spent playing *CoD: Black Ops II*. He now holds the Guinness World Record for longest ever videogame marathon.

Separated at Birth!

NO. 47 *Grand Theft Auto V's* Trevor Phillips and Jack Nicholson



'Neurotic' doesn't begin to describe one of these men. Unbalanced, unhinged, dangerous. And the other's Trevor (boom-tish!). Jack's got a knack for making us feel brilliantly uncomfortable on screen, never sure what he's going to do next, and we get that vibe from Trevor immediately. However, we think Jack would like Trevor a lot - after all, he has access to whole load of wonderful toys.

ABE'S CODYSEE



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#OMGWTFISCODYSEE



► OPINION

CROSSING OVER

Angry Sackboy wants to know why videogaming's greatest crossover is a movie.

The first 30 minutes or so of *Wreck-It Ralph* threaten to make it the greatest animated feature ever made. From act two onwards the momentum fizzles somewhat as the cameos dry up and things get a little more saccharine and formulaic, but there's no denying that first half-hour is something special.

An ode to videogame characters the likes of which we've never seen.

You see, *Wreck-It Ralph* introduces a living, breathing world behind the glass and plywood. Videogame characters are alive, working hard during arcade hours

before clocking off for the night while it's closed.

Maybe it sounds childlike on paper, but it's not, really. It's an imaginative

fusion of *Toy Story* and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*; a sentient, secret race of playthings that have their own lives to live while they're not being played with, all living in one big, behind-the-scenes universe together.

Characters from all over the arcade travel through the power cables to the powerboards connecting the machines together. This is Game Central Station. They can even visit other machines; characters meet in the *Tapper* machine to sink a few root beers and the arcade's villains regularly meet in *Pac-Man* to reflect upon the challenges of the being a bad guy. Videogame villains aren't bad, you see. They're actors, more or less. They're playing a role.

I won't ruin the many cameos and subtle references *Wreck-It Ralph* jams into its opening

act. You should just watch it. However you end up feeling about the film after the incredibly strong start tapers off, there's no denying it was clearly made by people who understand and appreciate videogame culture.

The question I have is why did *Wreck-It Ralph* have to be a movie? Why couldn't videogaming's most imaginative crossover ever have been a videogame? I've been pondering this for a few years.

I'm not talking about *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale*; this is not the kind of crossover project I mean. Don't misinterpret me; I don't have anything


against the game. What I'm talking about, however, is something more elegant than simply putting a bunch of well-known videogame characters on

a screen and making them kickpunch each other. I'm talking about something like *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit came out in 1988 and remains an incredibly unique movie experience. For any of you who've never seen it, in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* cartoon characters, or "toons", are living creatures, acting in cartoons the same way human actors shoot normal feature films. The reason it's such a noteworthy film, however, is the unprecedented level of cooperation between major studios that was displayed. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* was and remains the first and only time Bugs Bunny and Mickey Mouse have shared a screen together. Remember the scene featuring Daffy Duck and Donald Duck as duelling pianists? Putting all these competing characters in the same world made for an amazing experience. The film was a box-office smash, coming in second to *Rain Man* on the list of top-grossing films for 1988.

But what about an original game, set inside the world of gaming itself? Like *Tron* meets *Last Action Hero*. An adventure set upon a backdrop filled with the characters we love. Could video gaming publishers work together, just once, on the ultimate piece of fan service? If Disney and Warner Bros. did it, anyone can – right?

They did, of course. And it's called *Wreck-It Ralph*.

Unfortunately we can't play it. 

"Why couldn't videogaming's most imaginative crossover ever have been a videogame?"



I CAN FIX IT!

Special Edition Bundle

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experience new ways to play



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Push blocks and solve puzzles



Grapple, swing and control vehicles



Take pictures to create unique stickers and decorations



Moderate violence, moderate coarse language



PS VITA
PlayStation Vita

SONY
make.believe



► OPINION

GAMES ARE MAINSTREAM.

So why are we still hearing the same tired arguments for why they're worthless?

Over the last 20 or so years that I've been playing videogames I've endured all the typical complaints parents proclaim for spending too much time in front of the TV. 'It's a waste of time' and 'they're full of violence' are my two favourites.

Ok, admittedly they are full of violence; that's impossible to refute. But that's not what attracted me to the medium in the first place. Every time I hear the theme to *Final Fantasy X*, Suteki da ne, tears well up in my eyes. The incredible piano solo reminds me of a tale of love and loss, sacrifice and pain and just a tiny shimmer of hope. Nostalgia in its prime is still the reason I play videogames. Sure the experience of pinning necromorph bodies on the wall with their own limbs, hanging them up like fleshy dartboards, is stupidly enjoyable, but when it's present the emotional experience has always taken precedence. *Mass Effect* anyone?

Looking at media perceptions of the industry it's disheartening to see the focus aligned solely on violence. We've all heard gaming condemned for being the cause of aggressive behaviour, yet opinion within the scientific community remains mixed. Some suggest games and children are a mix for violent disasters while others maintain there is little to no link.

Whatever the general consensus it's sad that only a marginal part of the population will experience gaming at its greatest. When gameplay, sound and narrative seamlessly fuse together to move audiences, the effect is arguably more

visceral and intoxicating than any book, movie or piece of art could ever hope to achieve. Why else would I bother sinking 100+ hours into the adventures of Tidus and Yuna? *Portal*, *Journey* and *Flower* prove the industry can produce great experiences that are non-violent.

Then we've to deal with the idea our favourite medium never did good for anyone's life. Should I — or you — give up now? Of course not! In light of the recent *Black Ops II* launch consider this: the title is expected to break records as the biggest entertainment launch of all time and if it succeeds who will it knock off the top perch? *Modern Warfare 3*. That's right, an industry that generates millions of jobs around the world and is a multi-billion dollar giant never helped no-one. As an aspiring videogame journalist eager to share my love of this industry with like-minded individuals I say bugger off. You can criticise me all you like but I sure as hell ain't going anywhere.

If you come across someone who's not convinced games have a good soul, tell them about psychologist Emil Hodzic, who I recently interviewed as I was talking about the negative effects of videogame addiction. He caused me to stumble upon this absolute gem.

"Some kids have actually used videogames to block out the trauma that's going on in their homes... the only thing that was keeping them somewhat sane was their ability to tune out via the games. It was actually one of the best things they had to hold onto in that situation."

I rest my case. 🎮



OPINION

Martin Gladstone

Martin Gladstone's love for gaming once led him in front of thousands of people dressed as Nathan Drake.

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change online



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Speak to us!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins something awesome, too! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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This is the caption that disproves the point below. **You'll see**



LETTER OF THE MONTH

ONLINE AIN'T FINE

What's up *OPS* & fellow gamers,

I've only really just got into videogames in the past year and I'd like to say just how great the mag is, to ask some curious questions and rant like a Facebook addict on some meaningful issues.

I come from a semi-small town in the middle of "woop woop" with about 14,000 people and I now have every *OPS* issue in the newsagency with my name on it. I must say you guys do a great job; all your reviews and previews are thoroughly well written and concise, a lot better than IGN.

Moving on, I've just recently started hoarding videogames and have a massive collection now (about 40). I love gaming but I'm curious as to which games are going to be rare on the PS3 in 10 years time? Or even in general? I think it's a cool topic to touch on in your mag. I mean I never thought "said game" on SEGA Mega Drive would be worth well over \$500 and it is. Some even more and it's not a matter of opinion; people just want it, it's popular among collector's you could say. There was a copy of *Air Raid* on Atari for example that went for over \$18,000. Crazy aye? Either way, the topic's there for you *OPS* and I'd love to hear your perspective(s) on the matter.

Now for my rant; I own a fair few online multiplayer games and got caught in the *CoD* affair. I enjoy the series as a whole but since *Call of Duty 4* launched it seems that it owns the online gaming spectrum. I mean it's all I ever hear from friends and the internet, I guess.

I can't even play *GTA IV*, *Bioshock 2* or even *Uncharted 3* multiplayer without having problems becoming a better ranked player. I have a perfectly good Internet connection, it's just that there are rarely any players, online people don't seem interested in any other game beyond *CoD*. Maybe I'm just being a tad ignorant but I just wish *CoD* would just stop and allow another game to take reins as the king of online multiplayer. Also why doesn't *Vanquish* have multiplayer? Imagine that?

Awsome, I know!

Lance Colak, via email

Hey Lance, thanks for the props. We do our best every month to make all words you read worthwhile. Sometimes we spend hours on a caption.

We feel your pain on the wall-to-wall *CoD* situation. But it really does seem to flick the switch of a lot of people. Personally, we hope *GTA V* will level the playing field by offering truly amazing sandbox / co-op multi.

As luck would have it, the subject of collecting games is very much dear to our hearts. Popular opinion suggests that very little will be of value in this downloadable, trade-in game world we're living in – but that's not quite correct. If you're looking to find a good 'stash away' item you should look towards the following examples.

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Fortune Hunter Edition, which was one of those 'only 200 made' dealios, goes for US\$1055 used and US\$4000 new. Other lusted-after items include the *Fallout 3 Survival Edition* (US\$400 new) and early retailer copies of the supposedly cancelled *NBA Live 11* go for (US\$1000).

So yeah, focus on limited editions for excellent games, or break into a games publisher and steal the games they wanted to sweep under the rug. Simple, really.

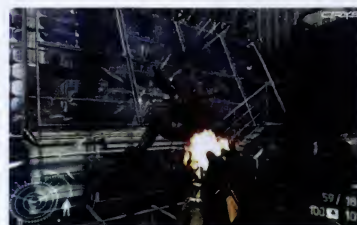
UNDER PRESSURE

Hello *OPS* peeps

I'm writing to you about the instant game collection feature that's a part of PlayStation Plus. The concept on paper is fantastic: download semi-new games for free, yay! It sure helps people like me that aren't up to date with all the latest and greatest games. But the crux of my problem with it is the time periods on these downloads. They all seem to be on a fixed expiry date.

About two months ago I downloaded *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* and played through the whole game and had about three months to play it – no problems there. But I just recently downloaded *Crysis 2* which is one of the newest additions to the instant game collection.

When I installed it I discovered I had just three days to play it compared to the 60 something days I had for *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. This is absurd



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS:

**NI NO KUNI:
WRATH OF THE
WHITE WITCH**

Read all about it on
p60!

"Errr kids when can I have a go?"



and completely unfair to the consumer. Not every game should have a fixed expiry date. Each game's expiry date should vary according to content and I should be able to play it in my own time rather than having to rush through it in 72 hours. Fix it Sony!

Josef Barker, via email

That's odd, Josef. The titles you download in the Instant Game Collection are yours to play – without time limit – so long as you remain a member of PlayStation Plus. If your subscription does lapse you can still access your old downloads when you resubscribe, or buy them outright.

AGE WARS

A message for the kids,

"Games are for everyone" is the old saying. But as you know most gamers are over 30, in fact the average gamer is 32. Saying that, it seems most of the younger aged gamers have this stereotype that you can only be 20 or younger to be a gamer. Not true proven with statistics.

It's funny to hear kids tell adults that we have no lives or that we live in our mum's basement. But in fact most of us gamers are tradies, lawyers, and professional people. Most of us have a house, cars, married, kids and lives. Just because we enjoy gaming shouldn't be any different than the 15 year old playing games. The fact that we all enjoy gaming is what matters.

To some of us gaming with our friends is our Facebook or the same as drinking at the bar with our mates. It will be great when the R18+ rating comes out next year, only because all the younger kids will have to send all their mums to the midnight launches. So before you little kids start talking trash just remember you're still living under mummy's roof, and it's you guys who aren't old enough to play.

Mehire2, via email

Come on now Mehire2 – if that is in fact your real name – let's not antagonise the kids. Gaming is diversifying like never before and the people who have been around since it was SEGA vs Nintendo need to welcome the new generation, just as much as the new wave need

to respect the veterans. You really don't want to be that cranky old sod who sits on his porch in Nuketown, shotgunning kids for stepping on his lawn. Hopefully the matchmaking of the future will allow us to 'filter to ability to grow facial hair and secure a mortgage', but until that happens you need to play nice like.

VITALISED

Dear OPS,

I am a proud 3G/Wifi PS Vita owner but I'm far from overwhelmed when it comes to game choice on it.

Before I get into this, I adopted a 3G/Wifi PS Vita day one with copies of *Wipeout 2048*, *Uncharted: Golden Abyss*, *MotorStorm RC*, and soon after launch, *Unit 13*. All of these games offer interesting features but in general, are not consistent across all of those games. For example, *Uncharted* is a graphical marvel but I don't think the 'Black Market' worked as expected – it certainly didn't for me. *Wipeout*, again the same sort of story, a must buy day

one but doesn't have any flexibility in it to explore its magical environment.

So with that in consideration, enter Criterion's new *Need for Speed Most Wanted*. From my lounge I'm going to declare this game a system seller for the PS Vita. I picked this game up on release and simply couldn't get enough of it. The game itself looks pretty impressive and, sure, there are some shady frame issues when things get a little intense, but the ability to run four players in the multiplayer mode, and have connectivity to the Autolog, along with the sheer size of playing field, is something that anyone can get into.

Got a spare 10 minutes – go bash some billboards and discover some cars. Got a good 20 minutes – do some races or take down some cops! Still not sure what to do – jump into some multiplayer or just cruise around the city in a car and earn general Speed points.

The model works so well for the PSV, and considering I have children, its flexibility to pick up and be play anywhere is sensational. It ticks all the boxes for me and doesn't require the 100 per cent concentration that something like *Uncharted:GA* or *Unit 13* might. If Sony can get together with people such as Criterion more often and produce this standard of PSV game all the time (not necessarily in the racing space) – there really is no telling just how successful the platform could be.

Wade Rushton, via email

Zero arguments here. Rad game. We're hanging for *Persona 4*.

Cuttings

► Neigh

I'm looking to get some good horse related games for my girlfriend to play.

David Murray Forrester, via Facebook

There aren't any 'pure' horse games. *Skyrim*, *Red Dead Redemption* and *Shadow of the Colossus* are your options.

► We can help with that

Hi guys, are there any good games that are being released soon?

Alex Ioannou, via Facebook

Step one: turn to page 15. Step two: proceed until you hit the end.

► It's a hit, man

"So you're telling me it's NOT prostate cancer? Oh man, thanks Doc, nothing could ruin this day!"

Callum Turnbull, via Facebook

Cue comedy window. Dark, very dark.

► Influential

Glad to see my badgering about *Okami* led to a review. I think there's a lesson in all this.

Alex Olson-Young, via Facebook

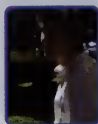
It's like asynchronous requests.

We could see it coming, and did something about before you even asked. Honest.

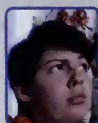
Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia on facebook®

▼ Storefront

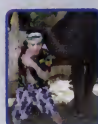
What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Jordan Neal
Black Ops II Pro Skater HD
"Bought it just for zombies."



Jack Glavin
GTA IV
"Turns out it deserves all the fuss."



David Rosenberg
Red Alert 2
"Still the best strategy game ever invented."



Steven Laurence
Assassin's Creed III
"An absolutely amazing game."

▼ Caption This

You put the words to the screen. Simple.



"I told you this would happen if you didn't stop singing Gangnam Style"

Angus Evans knows pop culture, and he's not afraid to use it

WIN PS3 & BLU-RAY ACTION PACK!

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Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to:
OPS EX2 COMP, CITRUS MEDIA, PO BOX 20154, WORLD SQUARE, NSW 2002
Please include your name, age, address and contact number with your answer (email and postal). For postal entries please write all details on the back of the envelope.
Competition closes 13/2/2013.



Blu-ray Disc

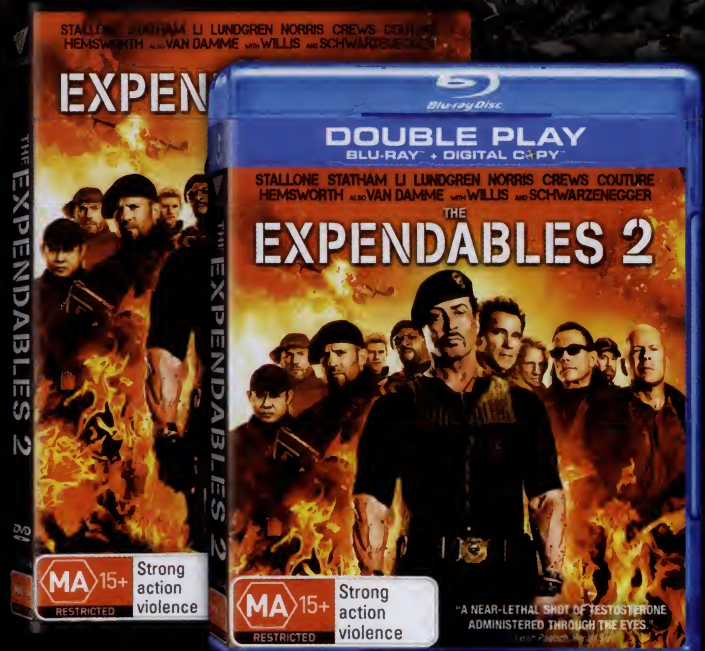
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I SEE DEAD PEOPLE

BY ADAM MATHEW

Traditionally, nobody's supposed to hear you scream in space. But in *Dead Space 3* space is just the place for the mad jabberings of a co-op looney 'watching your back' with a plasma cutter...



The pairing of Engineer Isaac Clarke and EarthGov Sergeant John Carver is simultaneously the source of *Dead Space 3*'s most exciting development, and its worst sticking point for returning fans. In theory, there's no better way to ruin a sense of oppressive fear than by having a drop in co-op mod. In practice, we're not so certain...

By now you've probably heard that hooking up with a buddy in *Dead Space 3* will offer you bonus content. We figured that meant "play through the game as Clarke and you'll be treated to one set of cinematics, play as Carver and you'll get another". Visceral Games has since shown us that its necromorph nightmare isn't as cut and dried as all that.

During our co-op demo Clarke and Carver are castaways on the ice planet Tau Volantis and must make their way out of the freezing snow and into a biological facility. We need to steer clear of open ground as Unitologists hunt about in gunships, piercing the night sky with spotlights in an effort to pierce us soon after with a big hail of bullet fail. A few of these militant Unitologists are stupid enough to be on the ground. When they attempt to ambush us they're torn to pieces by one of the old-but-revamped necromorph enemies, the Twitcher.

These buggers run like Olympic sprinters on PCP and their movements are more irregular and horrific than an irritable bowel syndrome sufferer. Lining up the type of shot you want (typically

not a headshot, which just pisses them off) will be difficult without a well-aimed burst of the time-retarding stasis ability. Nailing that perfect shot is made even more difficult by the fact that you're in a dark environment and the Twitcher has a shoulderlamp that flicks light about at crazy, disconcerting angles.

You'll be thankful for the ability to duck and evasive roll away from these abominations as Visceral says in co-op, the difficulty is being increased so that it feels like an equal, if not greater challenge than single player. Visceral isn't disappointing on the gore front, either. These are some of the most

afraid of? He's coming for you?," cackles the zombified thing, before morphing back into Clarke, who's at the end of a "hey are you okay?" question. On Clarke's screen we see nothing untoward at all. No manifestations whatsoever.

The freaky toy soldier is unique to Carver as it is tied into the unknown past of his son Dylan, who was raised by his mother when duty called Carver away to the stars. The scene is also a 'co-op only' trigger that starts what Visceral is calling its beta missions. The exchange prompts Carver to want to explore a sealed door that would have been otherwise ignored and inaccessible had we been playing

THINGS ONLY GET WEIRDER AS WE CONTINUE

disturbing necromorph variants we've yet seen and being overwhelmed by them triggers some of the best (read: worst) player death animations in the business.

THE MADNESS BEGINS

After the fight with the necromorphs, we move inside and things get downright bizarre. The player controlling Carver sees a creepy, looking, very out-of-place toy soldier statue waiting in the hallway. Upon picking it up in a short cutscene he turns to see a gore covered 'somebody' in a suit not unlike Isaac's. "What are you

single-player.

Things only get weirder as we continue. On the Clarke player's screen everything is as it should be when we approach an elevator. Granted the elevator is at the end of a hallway that's cluttered with junk (and potential hiding spots for horrors). But the player controlling Carver becomes hesitant as he sees quite a different scene.

A row of bigger, creepy-as-hell toy soldiers line up along the hallway amidst

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Since the beginning of the franchise, the Markers and the insidious Unitology religion have played a crucial role in *Dead Space*. But after two major games and a bunch of spin-off media, nobody really knows what either of them are for. Why do they send people insane and render them into hideous creatures with serated limbs?

"We're going to try our best to answer all of that in *Dead Space 3*" says Chuck Beaver, Story Producer. "The story arc in *Dead Space 3* is Isaac finding all of that out. You'll find out what the Markers are doing. Where they come from. What's their purpose. Where do the Necromorphs come from. Expect a few big twists on the way to all those explanations, but yeah, massive chunks of lore are revealed in *Dead Space 3*."

Jesus, Isaac, **get a save room already**

"Dude, leave the damn walls alone.
They don't have fruit wallpaper and **the
snozberries do not taste like snozberries**"

Pro tip: watch out for the Lurker. **They totally lurk**

DOG ALIENS

Clearly somebody at Visceral Games is a fan of *Alien 3* as *Dead Space 3* is going to have horrific alien variants spawned from dogs. The Unitologists who hoped to find artefacts on Tau Volatanis thought it would be a good idea to bring a colony of dogs with them as they figured they could be used as a means of sniffing out clues for the Marker.

In reality, that's Visceral's excuse for creating a mutated strain of the Lurker - the three-tendrill having, spike hurling beastie that was traditionally built out of the parts of children in the first two games. Is it weird that we prefer the baby ones?

When *Dead Space 3* got too creepy: "Hey Carver, wanna see my Privates?" **But you're all Corporals.** "Ohhh, I do love a man who knows how to pull rank"

the detritus. These silent mannequins watch us with their filth-encrusted, unmoving eyes, and we reckon the player who passes them will not want to turn their back for a second. The same player might mention to Clarke how odd an inclusion they are in this environment, at which point the other player will respond "what the hell are you talking about? There's nothing there. Are you freakin' mental?"

HERE COMES THE SUN

That sense of unease will spike later in the same level when the Carver player approaches a sealed door that only he is equipped to open. As he places his hand on the door, shadow arms burst out of it and seize him as the anguished voices of children howl. The corridor will then turn into hell on earth filled with one part fire, brimstone, and psychotic Unitology graffiti – another part family photos, birthday streamers and a child-like cut out of the sun. (Fans of *Dead Space 2* will recognise it as the one that scared

the bejesus out them in the nursery). It's freaky stuff that either points to some serious regrets festering in Carver's mind, or some darker history yet untold.

Meanwhile, on Clarke's screen, there are no hands, and not a single voice beyond Carver's wailing, or possibly the swearing of the player using him. The door is just a door and Carver is thrashing about firing wildly at anything but the pack of necromorphs stealthily advancing upon him (that he's completely oblivious to). After picking his would-be attackers apart with some well placed plasma, the Clarke player might ask again: "dude, are you trying to get yourself killed? What the hell is wrong with your controller – and, if I may be so bold, your crazy-arsed eyes?"

We're expecting arguments both on-screen and off; something that Visceral is, perhaps, deliberately intending. It certainly makes sense in the universe, as the alien Marker that's broadcasting all this insanity is well versed at turning humans against each other and getting them at each other's throats. Often with sharp items or bare teeth. You

might find yourself berating your partner for being too cautious or needlessly freaking you out for no reason, when in their eyes the walls are bleeding and there's every reason to shoot at shadows.

The hallucinations will be subtle, but what's more impressive is how indiscernible the points of divergence are between the solo and co-op campaign. Even if you do have a buddy describing all the weird stuff that's happening to them via a mic – be it visual, or an audio diary that sounds fine to Clarke, but is a shrieking diatribe from Carver's long-dead lover – you're going to want to replay the game at least once as both parties to experience their lunacy for yourself. Replaying a horror game with a mate to milk more scares out of it – how many titles in the genre can lay claim to that?

Visceral's new take on horror is both risky and unprecedented, but it also has the potential for a great many memorable moments. On the one hand, yes, the old jack-in-the-box, scripted horror tropes have their scare-factor halved when it's shared. The best way to make somebody

THE WALLS ARE
BLEEDING AND
THERE'S EVERY
REASON TO SHOOT
AT SHADOWS



DEMENTIA IS THE DISEASE EVERY MAN MUST SUFFER AND FIGHT ALONE.

Scavenger bot

Another new feature is the Scavenger bot which ties into the *Dead Space 3* weapon crafting system. Once it's equipped, like a gun, a large radar HUD pops up over the sights of the apparatus and gives you an indication of scavenger 'hotspots' in the environment. Get close enough and you have the option to fold up the scanner into a Scavenger bot and then deploy it on the ground. It'll dig into the area indicated and after a time it will deposit materials (like tungsten, semiconductors, scrap metal, somatic gel, transducers, and ration seals) into your Bench. How long it'll take to get there with the goodies can be checked in your inventory screen. It might take ten minutes. Technically you can drop the bot anywhere and reap materials, but dropping it on a hotspot will yield better results.

afraid is to surround them with the unknown, and to isolate them. In co-op, 'the unknown' is being achieved by your tenuous grip on reality – is what you see what's truly happening, or is the insidious alien Marker doing a masterful bait and switch to lead you into dangers you've been made oblivious to?

Similarly, the sense of isolation in the *Dead Space* series hasn't been plasma cut away, it's simply mutated into something more personal and disturbing. Dementia is the disease every man must suffer and fight alone. And though you've got a second set of eyes and another trigger finger, can you really rest easy knowing your safety depends on a guy who's a few semiconductors short of a satellite? You might also find yourself tactically alone in a firefight with 'two players full of enemies to deal with by yourself, because your buddy is running around like a chicken with their head cut off in an effort to avoid their own personal demons.

Visceral is to be commended for taking the time to craft a fully-formed co-op partner, too. You need only take one look at Carver's battle-scared face to see that the man has lived a hard life, and you need only look into his twisted living nightmares to see that he's got some skeletons in his space closet. It's great to see that Visceral has resisted the easy route of just carbon copying Isaac and slapping a different coloured decal on a one-dimensional cohort. Or trying


to insult our intelligence by saying "oh, come meet your new buddy, *Isaiah Clerk*, he's just another space engineer who happened to be at the same cataclysm".

IS THE SCARE THERE?

So what about the fear factor then? We're optimistic that at the very least the scares are on par with the first two games, but it's a difficult question for any game critic who's seen the game to answer. Short play sessions during daytime (and in a room full of people) do not provide the proper context and atmosphere for an experience such as this. On that front we have to place a bit of faith in Steve Papoutsis, Executive Producer of both *Dead Space 2* and *Dead Space 3*.

"To us, a *Dead Space* game has to have the following ingredients: intense atmosphere, survival, action, thrills, horror, tension" Papoutsis said in a recent interview with VG247.com. "So one of the goals with adding co-op was to have people be able to experience *Dead Space* with a friend – the feeling of going to a horror movie with someone. You can go to a horror movie with somebody and you can both be really into it, it's tense and you're on the edge of your seat, or you could go with a friend and you'd be drinking your sodas and eating popcorn and laughing but having a great time – we wanted players to be able to experience the game in a number of different ways."

Clearly a lot of effort is being put into *Dead Space 3*, and for the first time since it was announced we think the right kind of risks are being taken. This sequel may have its detractors who have chosen to fixate on the lean towards action-adventure, but their 'fears of not being afraid' are looking quite unfounded.

We never thought we'd say it, but co-op in a horror game is looking to be additive to the experience, rather than a needless tack on (see: *Dead Space 2*'s adversarial multiplayer). "We owe it to our players to continue to exceed their expectations," says Papoutsis. "We want to go beyond triple-A. We want to deliver a game that's Quad-A". Visceral's latest will enter our orbit on February 7. It's one space you really ought to watch. 

The Unitologist's creed: search for the truth. Praise Altman. **Never moisturise**



In space nobody can hear "STACKS ON!" *until it's too late*

THE FUTURE OF GAMING

2013 is ripe with possibilities and it's already shaping up to be another excellent year for PlayStation fans. Here are 47 titles that you need to know about over the next 12 months...



GTA V

The biggest one yet

One of the most influential series in the world has been dormant for over five years. Rockstar, though, have been very busy. Here's what you need to know about the game that changes everything, again.

It's BIG

The world of *GTA V* will be bigger than *GTA IV*, *San Andreas* and *Redemption* combined. It's going to be massive, and it's made that way to give you a huge variety of sheer stuff to do. Fly a jet. Play tennis. Ride a pushbike up Mount Chiliad. Explore the bottom of the ocean. While there's tonnes of things to do and see, the new version of *San Andreas* will tie it all together into a cohesive place with a common thread rather than a jarring, disparate patchwork.

Every GTA says something about a city

Rockstar collected census info about the people that live in the areas of Los Angeles and beyond, found out who they are, what they do and the vehicles they drive. They also hung out with the locals to get a feel for the place beyond the usual tourist activities. Rather than make it an open world with lots of stuff in it based purely on their imagination, it's based on real life with the purpose of being tweaked to fit their vision.

Bigger challenges, more rewards

Rockstar are going large with the missions and rewards, beyond switching between the three characters for different viewpoints and opportunities. Heists, similar in size to *IV*'s epic 'Three Leaf Clover', will play a much larger role, and the cash you earn (or, er, steal) will be used for more than upgrading weaponry. Money will be essential to the story – in context, motivation and application – rather than being collected to form a lazy, purposeless fortune.

Co-op out, multiplayer in

The story won't cater to co-op as not every mission features Michael, Franklin and Trevor but perhaps one or two of them. Rockstar also want to keep the story missions tight and directed – and including co-op would make that exceedingly difficult. The good news however is that adversarial multiplayer incorporates *Max Payne 3*'s 'crews' system, so that your group will be accessible from the start of *GTA V*, and Rockstar are focussing heavily on making this a huge part of the package. Expect gang rivalry to have a huge influence in *GTA V*.

Three characters means three ways to play

We all know about Trevor the maniac, Michael the retired crook looking for some excitement, and Franklin the up-and-comer. All of them have their own skills, personality and moods; as a player it's easy to imagine flicking over to Trevor when all you want to do is blow some stuff up, choosing Michael for sport and Franklin the repo guy for nicking cars. They'll be unique to make you want to pick them when you're not on a mission to see how they grow.

The world will feel alive

It's one thing to have cop cars screaming past as they chase someone, and NPCs spouting one liners. It's another to make it contextually relevant. For instance, gang members will hang outside shops and hassle people as they approach. On a technical level, the improved RAGE engine draws in even the most distant mountains, rather than from roughly 1.5km away. You're going to feel the scale and pace of the world like never before.



THE LAST OF US

Storytelling redefined

Naughty Dog know how to make a rollicking adventure. Now they're taking on the undead by telling a story of two survivors in a world gone to hell.

It takes two

It's called *The Last of Us*, and not *The Last of Me*, for a reason. You're taking direct control of leading man Joel but his teenage accomplice Ellie is either always by your side or never far away, and you need to work with her. Joel is innocence lost, a survivor who knew life before the pandemic that turns faces inside out. Ellie is innocence that never had a chance as she learns to live in a world where the people she can trust are in short supply.

The enemy within

There are psychotic infected freaks in *The Last of Us*, but everything we've seen in motion indicates that humans are your biggest enemy. They react to what weapons you have, and notice when one of their gang is missing (e.g. choked out) from the rooms he was wandering around. Crucially, they're also scavenging, fighting to survive – which is why they'll attack you. We're betting the mushroom-heads don't care if whether you're holding a stick or a shotgun and will only want to eat your face.

Heads-down display

Your TV is your window into the world, so why the hell would you want to have it cluttered up with stuff that gets in the way of what you need to see? Walk through the world and the HUD doesn't exist, but come across an item of interest – like a movie poster – and it'll gently pulse with



a prompt in the corner of the screen. Chance across a group of thugs and the gun icon will light up, indicating you're close to getting into a fight.

One ending, multiple paths

Naughty Dog has stated that there will be only one ending. However, that doesn't mean there aren't multiple ways to play through the game. Do you face enemies head on, or stay hidden and sneak past entirely? Would you rather distract someone by throwing an empty bottle,

construct a molotov cocktail, or use it as part of your med kit? You could end up discovering a whole different area on repeat playthroughs that you've never seen before.

A new way of telling a story

There's a lot to discover about Joel and Ellie, and the world they live in before and after the pandemic. Expositional moments won't be limited to cutscenes or predetermined points, but are tied to



Crysis 3

There's more of a focus on the open world than *Crysis 2*, but not going as far as the original. Expect open world hubs that will give you creative control from point to point. Multiplayer has been overhauled – look forward to the one versus many modes.



Aliens: Colonial Marines

The game that's been in development since 2006 is shaping up to be a true sequel to the *Aliens* movie. The story fills in more of the background of the planet as you weave through buildings and rooms from the movie.



Dead Island: Riptide

Import your character from the first game, and when you're playing with a mate who's starting fresh, the enemies will be scaled in difficulty to suit both players. Weapons aren't the only key to survival: you'll need boats to traverse the open world.



Grid 2

Codemasters want their game to be a technical showcase. More realistic but accessible handling, and crashes that see cars deform realistically. They've fiddled with the physics under the bonnet, and this looks like it'll be 2013's best racer.



Watch Dogs

Ubisoft have confirmed this will appear on PS3, and it looks utterly amazing. Fine details flesh out the world where you need to think creatively to make your mark. Multiplayer bleeds out from the console and onto smartphones and tablets.

“YOU WON'T WANT TO BE FRANTICALLY SCRABBLING FOR A BANDAGE WHILST IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIREFIGHT”

items and locations that you'll stumble on. For example, several movie posters are dotted throughout the city, and hearing what they mean to Joel and Ellie will fill out their background. It's up to you to track them down.

A technological marvel

Naughty Dog have been working on games exclusively for the PS3 over the last six years; they know the system inside out, and what they can do with it without having to compromise for other platforms. Those screen shots show off a beautifully destroyed world littered with small details, and in motion the character movements and soundscape all work together to create a stunningly tense but engaging place to be. There's no doubt that this is going to be one of the most atmospheric games you'll ever play.

Ellie's a sidekick you'll like

Joel's 14-year-old accomplice isn't a helpless girl you're burdened with. Because you'll always be in control of Joel, Ellie has to be intelligent to do the things you need her to. She's integral getting to places and items you can't, and her behaviour will change depending on the situation you're in. Get into a jam –



being choked to death, by example – and she'll be behind the guy with his hands on your neck with a brick to brain him. For example.

It's all in context

When Joel ties a bandage to heal his wounds and he's near people that could hear him, he does it quietly. Come across a group of bad guys and he'll hunker down, telling Ellie to do the same, his breathing slightly ragged in the stressful situation. She'll (quietly) point out people you might have missed when you're pointing the camera elsewhere – and react when she sees a dead guy who was alive a few moments prior. It's a smart game that does the stuff you're thinking of in your head.

Multiplayer

Don't panic; it's not going to be tacked on team deathmatch. A recent posting

on ND's website asking for a co-op game designer to be responsible for (among other things) 'game modes' and 'social features'. Although campaign co-op's been ruled out for *The Last of Us*, *Uncharted 2* and *3* co-op multi proved that Naughty Dog can make it contextually relevant to the story. We're betting on an extension to Joel's story with people from his past.

Life doesn't stop when you're scrabbling for change

And neither does time in *The Last of Us* when you're looking for something in your backpack. The inventory screen pops up when you want to get something out but the game continues – enemies are still moving around. You need to prepare before you go in armed, as you won't want to be frantically scrabbling for a bandage whilst in the middle of a fight.



Injustice: Gods Among Us

DC's superheroes go fist and gadget first in a side-on fighting game that's being made by *Mortal Kombat* devs, NetherRealm. While there's no blood, it's high-impact stuff where the environment plays a pivotal role.



Lost Planet 3

Capcom's previously lacklustre snow-blowing action adventure gets an extreme makeover by new developers Spark Unlimited. Characters have more of a presence, and – amazingly – it's very dramatic. A sleeper hit waiting to pounce.



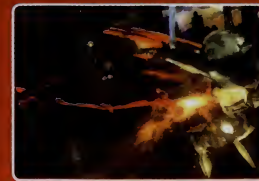
Fuse

Insomniac Games is trying something very different: a four-player co-op shooter where you'll be able to jump between each agent on the fly to expand your combat repertoire. The weapons each character uses also dictates their role, and how they grow.



DmC Devil May Cry

Dante has evolved. He's now a cynical, *smart smart* alec with a bolstered move set in a game that's action packed but laced with social commentary. Style counts for as much as sheer demon-blasting power. If you were left wanting more from *Bayonetta*, look here.



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

We're expecting this to be one of the first R18+ titles. Raiden gets his own story and diverges from the usual stealth gameplay, though you'll still have to be sneaky. It's more *Ninja Gaiden* than *Metal Gear* in many ways.

GOD OF WAR: ASCENSION

Why Kratos isn't dead

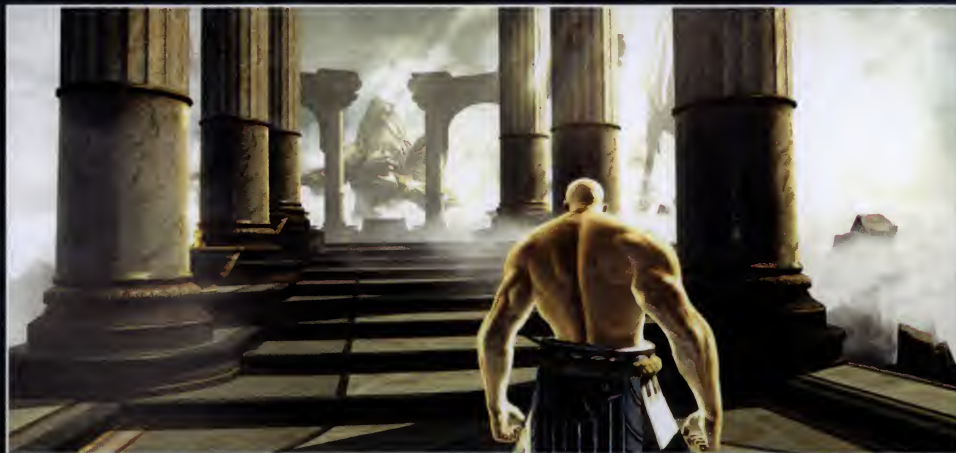
The end of *God of War III* was emphatic. However, the angriest bald man is back in a tale that shows him off before revenge consumed his life.

It's adventure as only Kratos knows it

Although Kratos may be a man rather than a god this time around, he's not underpowered as he battles mythical creatures that need death by a thousand enormous cuts. Towering elephant men and sea monsters, large-scale set-piece battles and twisting architecture all make this an authentic *God of War*. As it should be: *Ascension's* being made by the people who know Kratos best, Santa Monica Studios, the team behind the first three PS2 and PS3 titles.

You're up against brand new enemies

Kratos has dealt with Ares and Zeus head-on (or, er, head off) in his other adventures. Now he's up against the three Furies (no, not furries, that's what Clint's into), three ladies who hold the bonds that keep Kratos under Ares' command. They're distinct from each other and one of them, Maegara, has four long limbs that jut from her back. Todd



Papy, game director, says she will be the one to charge in and come after you.

Welcome to tool time

When you think of Kratos attacking, you think of him wielding the iconic Blades of Chaos. While they return, he's also going to be scavenging from defeated

foes, picking up their weapons for himself and altering his abilities. Hammers are heavier weapons, while self-replenishing spears are great for long-range enemies. However, he can only carry one extra enemy weapon – you won't have a weapon wheel. There really isn't much room to store things in his man-skirt.



Discover more about the man behind the legend

Ascension's a prequel, chronologically set six months after Kratos kills his wife and children when serving under Ares (10 years before PS2's *God of War*, and five years before PSP's *Chains of Olympus*). By the time *GoW III* rolled around, Kratos was consumed by rage. There's loads of room here to get even more into Kratos' head as he picks apart the demons that are creeping into his psyche, and he even saves a guy from being speared in the face. That's not the Kratos we know...



Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel

Salem and Rios have been shelved in favour of two nameless blokes, with promised rich customisation and upgrades to set yourself apart from your mates. Visceral Games (*Dead Space*) are developing.



Metro: Last Light

Ready yourself for proper survival horror from a first-person perspective. Multiplayer's been binned to concentrate on the single player portion – which is a wise step. On a technical level this looks like it's going to amaze some balls as well.



Splinter Cell: Blacklist

Guns, gadgets and stealth return as Sam Fisher goes back undercover and travels the world. Early footage showed off bullet-time headshots, but more recently we've seen a return to creeping in shadows.



Kingdom Hearts 1.5 HD Remix

Wow. *Kingdom Hearts Final Mix*, *Kingdom Hearts Re:Chain of Memories*, and *Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days*. All are being remastered in HD, though the event scenes from once DS-only *358/2 Days* won't be playable.



Until Dawn

A tongue-in-cheek horror title based on teen slasher movies. Eight teenagers go into the woods, and a killer is tracking them down. If someone dies the story rolls on to its grisly end. Loaded with opportunity to replay and see what you could've done.

"A HUGE SENSE OF SCALE IN THE ENVIRONMENTS AND THE ENEMIES"

Older (but younger) and with more tricks than he had in the past (future)

Eh? Yes, it's odd in the canon, but Kratos has new powers. 'Life Cycle' is a type of magic that can rebuild specific parts of a level by sending their components back in time. You'll also be able to hold enemies in place for a few seconds using this. He also has a new 'rage' mode that activates automatically, and the attacks alter based on what elemental power – either Air, Earth, Fire or Water – is equipped at the time.

QTEs are MIA

Well, sort of. Weakened enemies in previous titles had very large icons floating above their heads, waiting to be pounded so that Kratos could finish them off. In *Ascension*, enemies in a such a state will have a silver arc above them indicating you can jump on and put them down. Or, you could pick them up and use them as a weapon. You'll also have to watch enemy movements to dodge bigger attacks rather than responding to commands on-screen. It all helps make *Ascension* a more refined action title.

It's probably the last God of War game on PS3

And it looks pretty damn sweet. This will be the first game to be presented in stereoscopic 3D, and there's no getting away from a huge sense of scale in the environments and the enemies, from the close-up moments of finishing off the elephant-man to the gigantic sea monster. Plus, whether there's been official word from Sony or not, a new PS4 feels close. Making the next *GoW* home console title on PS4 would be ace.

But it's probably not the last God of War we'll see

Although it's set six months after Kratos kills his family, the catalyst for his rage, and many years before *God of War* and *Chains of Olympus*, what happens in those six months? How many days and weeks will *Ascension* cover? While *God of War* isn't shy in showing flashbacks, there's a lot of room for another Kratos adventure to be placed in here. Frankly, he's far too popular to let go. And, also, what about a PS Vita *God of War*?

Multiplayer's smarter than you think

Thematically, the four-versus-four mode isn't there just for the sake of having an online competitive mode. Like *Assassin's Creed*, the multiplayer expands upon the lore of the game, with players (Spartans versus Trojans) aligning themselves to a god in order to please them by taking down a common enemy in the middle of the arena. We're anticipating some background on who it is that we're battling against – and for – before each match.

No, really, it's very clever

Consider there's a lot of team-based modes with a static camera. It'll keep the action focussed on a particular part of the action happening on the screen, and rewards familiarity with how the stages change and transition. There's magic at your disposal depending on how you block and parry attacks, as well as effects that negatively buff your opponents.



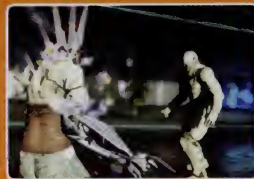
Deadpool

Transformers devs High Moon are bringing the merc with a mouth to life. He's a character with a strong personality, and the challenge will be making this shine through. All reports so far indicate a game laced with humour and fourth-wall breaking moments.



Beyond: Two Souls

Creator Dave Cage is known for pushing emotional boundaries in his games. This is looking like a deep psychological thriller, a story about a girl spiritually tied to a ghostly entity. Branching storylines and multiple paths through will keep you busy.



Remember Me

A bold techno-thriller where memories are everything. Refreshingly stars a female lead (not that that should be a thing), and you won't be shooting guns. Plus there's no co-op or multiplayer. The narrative is the drawcard, but the action will be plentiful.



Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2

Details are tight on this third-person action-adventure. Gabriel stars as Dracula with two threats to deal with. He's trying to regain his power, but also needs to off the Belmont clan who want him dead. He has a bitchin' castle, too.



The Last Guardian

The 'is it, isn't it' title gets more and more alluring. Team ICO's third tale of friendship will have a fully functioning physics system comparable to *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, with other Sony studios pitching in to get it done.

BIOSHOCK INFINITE

The next 'proper' BioShock

It's not a sequel to the first *BioShock* but it unmistakably belongs in its world. Here's why this is more than pie in the sky.

The lines between good and bad are blurred

Andrew Ryan was the 'bad guy' in *BioShock* before he died for his beliefs – and to prove a point – thus revealing the *real* bad guy who had been duping you all along. In *Infinite* Booker DeWitt, a former Pinkerton agent, has a massive gambling debt and he's rescuing the captive Elizabeth to pay that off. Pinkerton agents were not nice guys; by implication, Booker isn't a guy you'd have round for tea and scones, but he's doing a 'good' deed. We think.

It's a product of American times

And how times have changed. Sure, *Infinite* is set in 1912, but over its protracted development time the Tea Party rose to prominence, and the Occupy movement rocked Wall Street. These are distinct parallels to the rich Founders and its leader Comstock who uses religion to propagate his xenophobic agenda and the underdog Vox Populi who are rallying against it. Columbia, the floating city, is an idealistic place and was created to be the ideal version of America. Like the real thing, scratch at the surface and you'll find a lot to disagree with underneath.

It's a Levine-created world

BioShock 2 was a fine sequel to the first game, but Levine had naught to do with it. So what does the 'BioShock' label mean for *Infinite*? Don't expect the



story to continue or the combat systems to be recreated, but rather the overall themes and aesthetic, like steampunk-esque devices that keep the city up and running. It's also a familiar name rather than creating a brand-new title; if you've played *BioShock* before you're going to have a reasonable idea of what to expect.

Freedom in combat

Skyhooks and 'tonics', *Infinite*'s version of plasmids, give more opportunity to get to Elizabeth and off Columbia rather than the pointy end of a gun. She's an integral partner when you're in a skirmish; her amazing powers can retrieve objects that are stuck in another time albeit at a

cost to her well being. You're going to have to juggle the quest to save her with the need to save yourself. What are you willing to sacrifice?

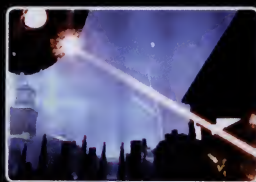
The big bads

Splicers were merely fodder in *BioShock*. Big Daddies were the real stars because they had character – and were tough as nails. The guardians of Columbia are four fold: a robotic George Washington figure with a minigun; an enormous metallic man that will charge and throw other enemies at you; blind men with a banshee's wail that will call in reinforcements; and a woman that can raise enemies from the dead. You'll have your hands full.



Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2

Powered by Crytek's superlative CryEngine 3, *Ghost Warrior 2* promises to be the prettiest long-distance murder simulator yet. You can't shoot Hitler's balls, but you can stab a dude and push him off a cliff, so that's a win.



XCOM

The history of 2K's *XCOM* reboot is a long and troubled one, marked by controversy and confusion. Once it was a first-person shooter, then it was a third-person action game, and now... who knows? Irreverent kart racer with aliens, maybe.



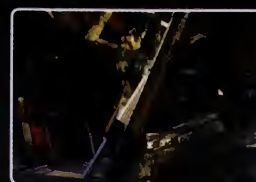
Brothers in Arms: Furious 4

According to Randy Pitchford, *Furious 4* is no longer a *Brothers in Arms* game and will be rebranded in the near future. Whatever: so long as we get to butcher Nazis *Inglorious Basterds*-style, we don't care what you call it.



Rainbow 6 Patriots

Now rumoured to be a PS4 launch title, *Patriots* is a squad-based tactical shooter with a story inspired by recent trends in US politics. In other words: the terrorists are Tea Partiers. Aw yeah. We've got your 2nd Amendment right here, you fascist dickbags.



Devil's Third

From the man behind *Ninja Gaiden* and *Dead or Alive*, *Devil's Third* is a stylish third-person action game with guns, swords, and gore aplenty. What would warfare be like in a world without satellites? According to this game: batshit loco.

TOMB RAIDER

The leading lady of gaming is back like you've never known her

'Vulnerable'. 'Scared'. They're not words you're used to hearing about one of the most famous characters of all time, but Lara Croft is back in a brand-new take on a well-trod story

She's not a sex symbol or object

There's no doubt that Lara Croft was a strong, independent woman in her debut design on the original PlayStation. However, she was ridiculously proportioned. Glance at the box art over the subsequent years and her shape changed: her physical design left a lot of people a little uncomfortable and to have, er, oversized features for titillation now would lead to a small revolt. New Lara, though, is still a strong, independent lead regardless of her sex or gender. Basically, she's normal. That's a win for everyone.

It's an origin story

This new *Tomb Raider* marks the

famous explorer's first real adventure. Shipwrecked on an island as a result of her actions she has to meet up with the other crew of her vessel and learn the basics of survival. She's scared, she's alone, and she needs to scavenge all the stuff she needs to survive – and learn to be a killer. It's a radical departure from older *Raiders*, but it still feels like a proper Lara Croft adventure.

XP counts towards being experienced

One of the worst *Tomb Raider* titles, *Angel of Darkness* tried to implement XP but failed. Lesson learnt. In new *TR*, Lara earns new abilities by doing stuff that could actually count towards new skills,

like skinning animals, killing enemies and finding treasure on the island. That XP then feeds back into acquiring skills such as new takedowns and increasing Lara's perception of the world around her. You're actively learning and being rewarded for discovery, and the rewards make sense.

It copies from the best...

Tomb Raider used to be the game that other games looked to. Now it's learnt a few things from *Uncharted*, publisher stablemate *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* and others as you'll need to think pretty carefully about how to take down enemies. Be stealthy and think about how to distract a group of goons so you can pick them off one by one rather than going in loaded to the teeth with bows and guns.

...to make something that feels new

What it might lack in originality it's going to make up in exciting and breathless moments. This is a new style of crafted adventure where the lead is vulnerable and eventually grows into their skin and role that we know. Although the world is open (to a degree) there's purpose and direction – and that's true to everything we've seen from the art and sound to the supporting cast and Lara herself. It's *Tomb Raider* as you've never seen it before.



Earth Defense Force 4

Goodness! Could it be? An *EDF* game that doesn't look like total arse? Amazing! Also, look at the size of that bug in the screenshot there – can you imagine how fun it'll be to shoot that thing with three of your friends? Hint: lots of fun.



Prey 2

Long delayed and hotly anticipated, *Prey 2* puts you in the grimy space boots of a former US Marshal kidnapped by ETs and compelled to work as a bounty hunter on a mysterious alien world. Ever wanted to be Boba Fett? Well, this is as close it gets.



CastleStorm

Combining RTS and physics-based tower-defence a la *Angry Birds*, *CastleStorm* looks to be a fun, vibrant, and addictive little game with enough strategic depth to keep it interesting over the longterm. Online multiplayer sounds like a blast.



Young Justice: Legacy

Take *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*, remove all the Marvel characters, replace them with DC's crop of adolescent superheroes, and et voila – you've got *Young Justice: Legacy*. Kids will love it, but adults...? Ehhh.



Whore of the Orient

We only know two things for sure about *Whore of the Orient*: 1) it's being made by ex-Team Bondi people in conjunction with George Miller's KMM, and 2) it's set in Shanghai just prior to WWII. The rest remains shrouded in mystery... for now.

METAL GEAR SOLID: GROUND ZEROS

The return of Big Boss

The PSP's *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker* was a brilliant achievement, and a fantastic story. This is both a sequel and a prequel starring a snake that you should keep both eyes on.

It'll tease Metal Gear Solid 5

Series creator Hideo Kojima has said that this is a beginning rather than an end to the series which has been ongoing since 1987. We're not completely sure what he means by that (though that could relate to the new tech that powers the game) but it's been confirmed that *Ground Zeroes* is the prequel to *Metal Gear Solid 5*, and the sequel to the amazing PSP title, *Peace Walker*. There's lots of space in the timeline between this and *Metal Gear Solid*. The birth of Solid Snake, anyone?

Look ma, no load screens

Previous *Metal Gear* games had distinct, segmented areas within the one location, separated by a load screen. For the first time, *Ground Zeroes* is a series of open worlds – everything you see in a level can be accessed. Even though you're travelling on a vehicle of some kind (a chopper between areas or across a single map) you'll never see a load screen.

Running on brand new tech

Ground Zeroes is the very first proper demonstration of Konami's new FOX engine, a clever bit of kit that's being designed for future Konami games – even PES and the next *Zone of the Enders*. The company is thinking long term and using this across all platforms with the goal to cut down dev time and costs. Frankly, it looks next-gen right now with impressive animations and lighting.

From day to night

Ground Zeroes will have a day/night cycle that affects enemy movements and patterns, and vehicles with lights can also give up your location if you're

caught in their beam. So far so standard, but the patterns and movements of lights are more natural and free-flowing than before. Should Snake cop an eyeful of a very bright light the screen will bloom and white out anything in your field of view. If Snake's blind, you're blind too.

Base Building

Like *Peace Walker*, you can expand the operations of your Mother Base. In *Peace Walker* this is a facility that gives you better weapons and facilities to treat sick soldiers. In *Ground Zeroes* you'll be able to walk around this in real time, and manage your base while you're away from the game by using a smartphone or tablet (maybe even your Vita?).

“VEHICLES WITH LIGHTS CAN ALSO GIVE UP YOUR LOCATION”



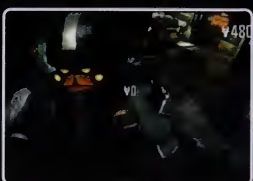
Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

A brand new *Sly* adventure from the team responsible for the HD remakes, *Thieves in Time* is shaping up to be an expansive, hilarious, and thoroughly stylish romp that makes clever use of PS3/Vita cross-compatibility.



Persona 4 Golden

An enhanced Vita port of what is arguably the best PS2 RPG ever made, *Persona 4 Golden* is a hyper-addictive blend of dungeon crawler and dating sim remarkable for its effortless sense of style, sophisticated narrative, and radballs soundtrack. Want.



Killzone: Mercenary

In *Killzone: Mercenary*, you play an amoral gun-for-hire out to make a quick buck working for anyone who pays, good guy or otherwise. Ever wanted to get cozy with the Helghast and gun down some Earthling scum? Well here's your chance. (You monster.)



Tearaway

A papercraft adventure from the maestros at Media Molecule, *Tearaway* takes advantage of all the Vita's bells and whistles to facilitate creative play on an unprecedented level. Charming and innovative, this has "blockbuster" all over it.



Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable

With its signature brand of no-nonsense run-and-gun gameplay, *EDF 2017* is a perfect fit for a portable console. It may be a bit ugly by most standards, but who cares? With design this tight, prettiness is strictly optional.

SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

The first game based on the show to feel authentic

Face it: other *South Park* games have sucked. They've made no sense and been shoddily put together. That's all about to change with this RPG that's being made by Obsidian. Here's why you'll want to come on down and have yourself a time.

It's a big game

South Park has been running for 16 seasons, with another three or so years worth of programs planned. That's a hell of a lot of content to draw from, and the game will draw from all of it – though probably not Isaac Hayes's Chef, as Hayes and the show acrimoniously split in 2006, and he passed away in 2008. There are countless characters, locations and tropes to employ in *The Stick of Truth*.

The ultimate fan service

If you're diehard *South Park* fan, then this is the game that will do the show justice. Its enemies are antagonists that have appeared in the show; think crab people, hippies, gingers, vampire kids. The individuals that fight on your side integrate their signature characteristics, like Mr. Slave destroying enemies by absorbing them into his butt.

It's written by Trey Parker and Matt Stone

Other *South Park* games have missed the mark somewhat, feeling like a cash-in on a popular license. This isn't some hack



job that takes the name and spits a few voice bites back at the player, it's going to feel like a proper *South Park* episode with Parker and Stone writing the script. Crucially, *The Stick* isn't just about taking the piss, as Parker and Stone always have a point to make.

It's adding to the world of South Park

In the 15 years of *South Park* no-one's ever thought about how the town of South Park is laid out. Since you're going to be travelling between the boys' houses, the school and other key locations for the first time *South Park*'s going to be mapped out. The show's creators are putting as much effort into this as they do the show, and it seems inevitable that this is going to feed back into the weekly episodes.

In experienced hands

When Obsidian are on their A-game they can nail the premise. Although they've had some misses amongst the hits all this studio does is make RPGs. Parker and Stone are involved with the overall direction, providing feedback. Put publisher THQ's fiscal situation aside, *The Stick of Truth*'s release date has slipped by a couple of months, which hints at a game that's been given the time it needs to reach its full potential.



Soul Sacrifice

The brainchild of Keiji "Mega Man" Inafune, *Soul Sacrifice* is a third person brawler for Vita in which the protagonist can sacrifice his limbs in exchange for a temporary burst of godlike power. Looks a bit like *Dragon's Dogma*, but with more tentacles.



Uncharted: Fight For Fortune

Fight for Fortune is a turn-based tactical card game for Vita based on the *Uncharted* universe. Interestingly, artifacts collected in *Golden Abyss* can be imported into the game and used in your deck, so get hunting!



Guacamelee!

El Presidente's daughter has been kidnapped by punks! Only Juan the luchador and his zesty sidekick Tostada can save the day! With its keen sense of humour and sprawling *Castlevania*-style level design, this could be something special indeed.



Ratchet & Clank: QForce

A return to the classic *Ratchet and Clank* run-and-gun gameplay of yore, *QForce* can be played either solo or co-op, and is cross compatible with PS3 and Vita. The new tower defence bits seem iffy, but we'll keep an open mind.



Knytt Underground

The latest in a popular series of indie platformers, *Knytt Underground* is – in the words of developer Niklas Nygren – “about the big questions; trying to understand life and our place in it – and failing completely.” How... philosophical!



BY ADAM MATHEW



COME TO AUSFAILLIA!

When it comes to the mixing of Australiana and videogames, our international interpretation is struth-worthy, worth stoning the flamin' crows about, or just a fair suck of the sav in general...

No matter what you call this blessed sunburnt country – Down Under; Sea Girty; The Arse-end of the Earth (credit: ex Prime Minister Paul Keating) – it really is the land that games forgot. Actually, perhaps 'forgot' isn't the best term. 'Remembered was there and made crap up about' works better.

For whenever it comes time to place a token reference to 'Oss-eyes' in a game, developers everywhere piece together what they need from three sources: Paul

Hogan movies, a dingo-related homicide that happened before the space shuttle exploded, and Fosters beer labels.

Collected for you here are some fascinating facts you may not have known about the Australian peoples and their culture – if you still insist on using that word. We fully expect that the hard facts contained herein will be used by future games designers, and shall replace the egregious lies taught in the public school system syllabus.



Come to Ausfailia

Saxton Hale - Team Fortress 2

Format PS3 Year 2007

Australians don't breed men, they breed MAN MEN. Just take one look at Saxton Hale, CEO of Mann Co., who is somehow related to *Team Fortress 2*. He makes Chuck Norris look like a sissy, and you should totally ignore the fact that his name is an anagram of the words 'hot', 'sex', and...uh yeah, never mind.

Boomer - SEGA Soccer Slam

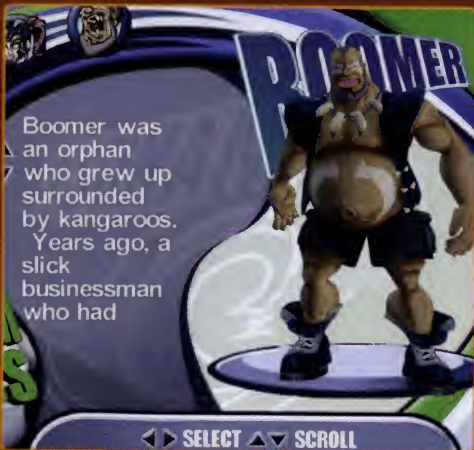
Format PS2 Year 2002

When they're not being held in the highest international regard, Australian professional athletes are beer-swilling, gator-wrestlers from the Outback.

Miranda Lawson - Mass Effect 2

Format PS3 Year 2010

You know that phrase "I wish they all could be California girls", well that's nothing compared to Australia, the country that has nothing but genetically perfect beach babes. Miranda Lawson, played by actress and all-round stunner Yvonne Strahovski, is one such 'Straylian super-chick. Bioware tries to explain away her physical perfection by way of gene tampering, but we know better.



Diana - Dead Space 2

Format PS3 Year 2011

Spoiler time, if you haven't played *Dead Space*, you may want to skip this one. Because Diana, the friendly Aussie voice who is guiding you to safety – well, she's actually a bitch, and a Unitologist to boot. She's determined to use you for nefarious ends, but gets several slugs in the chest for her trouble. That said, she had a decent Aussie accent before she died. Something for the headstone, perhaps.

SASR - Medal of Honor Warfighter

Format PS3 Year 2012

The phrase 'SASR' does not describe a chest infection that kills people in Hong Kong – and you may have dyslexia. It is in fact the name for an Australian Special Forces regiment that was recently represented in *MoH*. The Assault class in that game showcased the bad-ass, borderline-porno-moustaches frequently deployed by all Australian men.

Need for Speed: High Stakes

Format PSX Year 1999

All highway patrol police in Australia, particularly those doing laps of Durham Road in Western Australia, speak in clipped British accents. *Need for Speed: High Stakes* got that fact right, and it featured the only two cars in Australia: the Ford Falcon XR8 and the Holden GTS VT. Both family sedans held their own against Porsches, for some reason.



Ty - Ty the Tasmanian Tiger

Format PS2 Year 2002

Even extinct Australian animals wear board-shorts and throw boomerangs. Ty is quite a bit worse than all the horrendous interpretations of Australiana in this guide because he was designed by bonafide Australians who should have fricken known better. Fun game though.



Rook - Modern Warfare 2

Format PS3 Year 2007

Because Australia has no sealed roads (beyond that one desert highway filled with Mad Max crazies) every Australian is an expert offroad racer. Take Rook, the token Aussie member of Task Force 141. Not only did he have the skills needed to smash larger technicals off the road, he could even drive well when he'd taken a round to the face and was dead. His corpse had the good sense to keep its foot on the accelerator, thus allowing Soap to ramp into a plane. Oi, oi, oi?

The Sniper - Team Fortress 2

Format PS3 Year 2007

Two centuries of shooting roos, dropbears, dingos, crocodiles – and dingodiles – has made every Aussie a crackshot with a gun. Just ask the Lawrence of Australia, *Team Fortress 2*'s The Sniper, who says "Sniping's a real piece of piss, you bloody fruit shop owners!" Your guess is as good as ours.



Lawrence of Australia

The Sniper



The Bazaar Bargain

Sniper Rifle
Each consecutive headshot gives +10 charge per second.
A headshot reduces the damage a missed shot deals. The higher

The Shahanshah

Sword
+25% increase in damage when health is less than 50% of max.
-75% decrease in damage when health is more than 50% of max.

Ozzie Mandrill -Escape From Monkey Island

Format PS2 Year 2001

Any rich, successful Australian is a greedy, underhanded villain that wants to take over the world. Just take one look at Ruper...uh, Ozzie Mandrill, the antagonist in *Escape From Monkey Island*. His plan to conquer the Caribbean is simple; he challenges business owners to 'sword insult duels' and then uses his Australian superpower – 'an indecipherable accent and nonsensical insults'. Take that, ya bloody chuzwozzas!

Bathurst - TOCA World Touring Cars

Format PSX Year 2000

Bathurst, or "Baffurst" as it's correctly pronounced, is one of the few sealed roads in Australia (that's worthy of international attention). Race it here.

Come to Ausfallia

Naledi Atkins - BioShock 2

Format PS3 Year 2010

All Australians call their enemies 'buggers' or 'nuggets' and they hunger for the day when their nemesis goes "tits up". At least, that's what the world now believes, thanks to Naledi Atkins, Emelia Airheart's mouthier, more annoying sister. She was a (poorly voiced) Aussie pilot living in a city under the Atlantic Ocean. Reread that last sentence.

WHERE THE BLOODY HELL ARE YA?

Welcome to a driving tour of this great sunburnt land, courtesy of *Need For Speed II* (PSX, 1997).



Fact: the entire eastern half of Australia is one giant, lifeless highway, ala *Mad Max 2*.



Not only can you see Uluru from the opera house...



...but you can drive through it and get back to Sydney in one minute, 28 seconds flat.



Don't argue with EA's science. Just go and update Google Maps. Be sure to mark "Dingo Dan's Pub" in there, too.

007 nightfire

Alura McCall

An ASIS field operator, Alura is a highly skilled and deadly agent.

007.EA.COM

Alura McCall - 007 Nightfire

Format PS2 Year 2002

The Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) has a field operator who sounds like *Neighbours* star Kimberley Davies. In keeping with Australian modus operandi, Alura doesn't leave home without a knife, and what little clothing she does have is khaki; our national colour.

Stanley Kyburz - BioShock

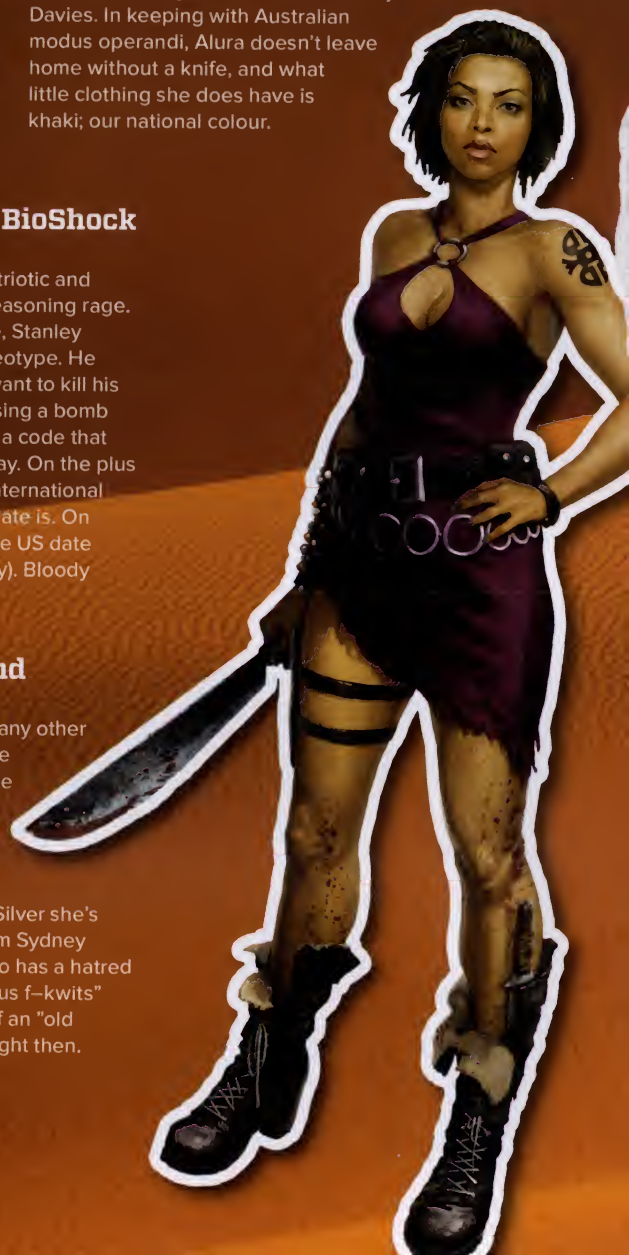
Format PS3 Year 2007

Australians are stupidly patriotic and hate their bosses with unreasoning rage. Senior Engineer of Rapture, Stanley Kyburz, was one such stereotype. He needed little incentive to want to kill his employer, Andrew Ryan, using a bomb that could be accessed via a code that was the date of Australia day. On the plus side, 2K made millions of international gamers Google what that date is. On the downside: they used the US date structure (month before day). Bloody drongos.

Puma - Dead Island

Format PS3 Year 2011

While holidaying in Bali (or any other tropical island) your average Aussie can instantly become a sweary killer when the situation requires. Puma knows how to handle a knife, several at once, in fact. According to Deep Silver she's a "half Koori, ex-copper from Sydney turned bodyguard". She also has a hatred for "rich assholes and famous f-kwits" and once shot the tackle off an "old bugged" child molester. Alright then.





Jacob 'Deke' DeCourt - Fear Effect

Format PSX Year 1999

Most expat Australians are violent sociopaths, overweight beer drinkers, or both. Just like Deke 'dubious accent' DeCourt, psychotic goon for hire in *Fear Effect*. He sounded like a mutant Kiwi.

Dolphin - Breath of Fire III

Format PSX Year 1997

Australia is girt by a sea filled with sharks and mouthy dolphins who pick fights and say 'sheila' a lot. Their primitive take on English (Australian) prompted developer Capcom to include an option to decipher perfectly readable, unspoken dialogue. We're not even making that up.

Tony Hawk's Underground 2

Format PS2 Year 2004

Australians always tell foreigners how much they love "throwin' a shrimp on the barbie", even though every single Australian calls them prawns. In *THUG2* you could become a shrimp vendor yourself, or you could piss off bikini clad locals by grinding seagull shit onto them. The especially racist among you could then find a 'Special Guest Star': a semi-naked, fully-random Aboriginal man hiding in a cave with a go kart. You were then told to smash handicap parking signs with him. Charming.



Maurie - Ty the Tasmanian Tiger

Format PS2 Year 2002

Any annoying Australian is called a 'galah', unless they're a cockatoo called Maurie, and then they're just called '#&'ing annoying'. In *Ty the Tasmanian Tiger*, the odious Maurie acted as the tutorial figure for Ty and he was a sulphur-crust pain in the arse. Decker out in a blue singlet (no pants) and a stubby-holder beer, Maurie was more Australian than Alf Stewart doin' doughies in a VB delivery truck.

Dingodile - Crash Bandicoot Warped

Format PSX Year 1998

Australia is full of animals which, when they're not trying to kill you, have interspecies sex to produce offspring that *will kill you*. Dingodile was one such abomination, borne of an unholy union between Dingo, Crocodile, and apparently also a bush pig, as he grunts like one. For those of you needing further proof of his Australian heritage: even after four or five redesigns, he refuses to wear shoes or a shirt. He also uses the word "y'as" when talking to a single person. Case closed.



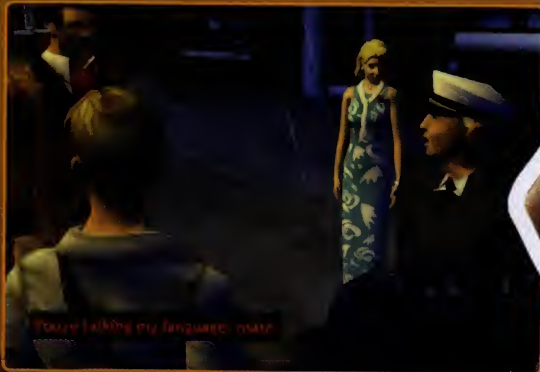
Knuckles - Sonic series

Format various Year 1994

All Australian animals, like their human counterparts, enjoy nothing better than a bloody good punch on. Hence Knuckles' name and over exaggerated fists. His Ausfailian-ness may irritate you, but just be thankful we never saw a PSP port of *Sonic Rush Adventure*, which featured Marine the Raccoon. That boomerang-eared thing would end every sentence with "mate" and sprinkle it with "strewth" or "crikey". The character was so bad the writer of *SRA* has gone on record to say he "hated Marine with a burning passion". Bullet: dodged.



Come to Ausfailia



Harry Gilligan - Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon

Format PS2 Year 2003

Australians can be roused from massive head injuries if you wave a used beer bottle opener under their nose. You did exactly that in *Sleeping Dragon* when your perpetually drunk, horribly voice pilot Harry had crashed the plane in the jungle and wouldn't wake up. Later on in the game he'd crash another plane (in the water this time) and head straight to a pub to celebrate. What a guy.

The Guru - Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves

Format PS2 Year 2005

When they're not taking over land and raping it of its precious minerals, Australians are wearing shitty vests and hassling Indigenous peoples. The Guru was a purple koala that's decked out in traditional Aboriginal facepaint, speaks gibberish, has mystic Yoda powers. Insomniac skirted racism pretty damned closely here.

Dogmeat - Fallout 3

Format PS3 Year 2008

Australians are so rugged and resilient, you can't have a post apocalypse without one of them being in it. Case in point: even the humble Blue Heeler can survive nuclear fallout and be your faithful companion. *Fallout 3*'s Dogmeat was one such best friend, and he could be counted on to maul radscorpions, find you useful scrap, or protect any last V8 interceptor you might or might not own. When we didn't have a mate in the world, we still had Dogmeat.



Jeffry McWild - Virtua Fighter 4

Format PS2 Year 2002

All Australians, particularly the subspecies known as 'bogans', can't spell basic names like 'Jeffrey'. Also, their last names must reflect how insane they are. Take Jeffry McWild for example, when he's not punching people in the face (national Australian past time), he's fighting the "giant, eight-meter long, human-eating *Satan Sharks*" that infest every square inch of our coastline.



Bungalow - Fur Fighters

Format PS2 Year 2000

Just like their human prey, kangaroos have a fondness for vests or unbuttoned shirts, because it's stupidly hot in *all of Australia*. You might think these animals would be much cooler if they simply didn't wear clothing at all, but you and your irrefutable logic would be wrong.

Roo - Streets of Rage 3

Format PSN Year 2012

Kangaroos frequently wear pants. How they pull them up and tie the drawstring (with boxing gloved hands) – or drop them when it's time to poop – has been fiercely debated by scientists.

Roger - Tekken 2

Format PSX Year 1996

Some kangaroos are genetically engineered animal soldiers. They fight in international fighting tournaments with velociraptors.





Kao - Kao the Kangaroo 2
Format PS2 Year 2005

Despite what you may have seen in accurate nature programs, Kangaroos run, they don't hop. They're also adept at throwing boomerangs, even with boxing gloved hands.

Kangaroo - Space Station Silicon Valley
Format PSX Year 2000

Kangaroos share their desert environments with 'useless camels' and love beating them to death for the amusement of others.

Sheila the Kangaroo - Spyro: Year of the Dragon
Format PSX Year 2000

Kangaroos can jump four times their own height. Sheila was rather poorly voiced by Czechoslovakian actor Edita Brychta and it burns our ears to think of her.

Kangaroo - Tokyo Jungle
Format PSN Year 2012

When it comes to survival, all animals are equal, but in Australia the animals are MORE equal. Every single kangaroo in the Australian outback is born with a Mike Tyson level of boxing skill.



Rooeys - Bomberman '94
Format PSN Year 2011

Kangaroos come in a variety of colours including pink, blue, green and purple. All of these colours afford them different abilities, which is nature being racist really.

LEST WE... FORGOT

The Australian-American war

According to the historical curators at Rockstar Games, the Australian-American War was totally a thing. Details are very sketchy as to why it took place, and even when, but we do know that at some point in the conflict kangaroos were weaponised...

GTA III

The war is first mentioned on Lazlow's radio show Chatterbox FM when a veteran of the war, Col. James P. calls in to talk about how no one cares about the Australian-American War. The vet also recalls how we Australians equipped boomerangs and kangaroos with explosives.

GTA Vice City

In *GTA Vice City*, the war is implied to have occurred as far back before 1986, as it was mentioned in a radio commercial for Ammu-Nation. The commercials talk about an anti-aircraft gun "used when we whooped the Australians' ass!". This implies that the United States won the war, but this is not definite, as the US Government played the Korean War and Vietnam War as victories after they copped a pasting.

GTA San Andreas

The war is loosely referenced early in *GTA San Andreas* after the San Andreas Earthquake rocked the state. In a WCTR news brief, Richard Burns said that the unnamed Governor of San Andreas was threatening to bomb Australia because of the earthquake, "...despite scientific evidence that it wasn't their fault."

GTA IV

In *GTA IV*, the war is mentioned again in radio, confirming that the conflict occurred in both *GTA III*'s and *GTA IV*'s continuities. On WKTT, a conservative radio station, a caller to The Richard Bastion Show says, "This country's going to hell! Ever since we let those damn Australians back into this country, everything has gone to shit! What the hell did we go to war with them for in the first place?" The host, Richard Bastion, replies "I'll tell you why, we did it for freedom, and for valuable munitions contracts." Every day's a school day.



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A man in a military-style uniform, including a black hat with a gold emblem and a black jacket, is looking down at a laptop. He is wearing black gloves and has a serious expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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in review



► **GAME OF THE MONTH**

Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

Because JRPGs haven't been this magical in a many a moon...

Review ratings

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. *OPS* has handed out this score only once.

This Month

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▼ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.





Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

The best JRPG in years

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RPG

RELEASE: JAN 24 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: LEVEL-5

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$89.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
THE POKE MANS?

Whether you already know it or not, *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch* is a collaboration of geniuses. It's a fantasy borne of the legendary RPG talents of Level-5 Studio, Oscar-winning anime house Studio Ghibli and the compositional works of Joe Hisaishi as performed by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. In Western terms, that's the rough equivalent of BioWare, Disney Pixar and John 'Star Wars theme' Williams linking up like Megazord.

This is the biggest of deals, and it's all yours: PS3 exclusive, baby.

Ni No Kuni follows the story of Oliver, a young boy recently bereaved by the sudden death of his mother. As his (delicious) orphan tears fall on a doll his mother made for him it transforms into a fairy lord, aptly named Drippy. This happy chap offers Oliver hope that if they travel to the parallel world from whence he came called *Ni No Kuni* (lit. Second Country) and free the people from an evil djinn called Shadar, they may just be able to resurrect Oliver's mother. Apparently everyone in Oliver's world is linked to a soul mate in *Ni No Kuni*,

so helping the people in one world affects the other. Armed with new magical powers, a spell book and a brown sticky stick, Oliver and Drippy set out bring mumsie back to life (without the help of zombification).

After an initial burst of tutorials on how to control Oliver in his world, interspersed with long cut scenes (which often makes you forget if you're playing a game or watching a movie), the land of *Ni No Kuni* opens – and here's where the fun starts. While walking through this free roaming paradise it's easy to be lured off-task by monsters lurking here and there and you'll spy pixies (or 'glims') begging to be belted for HP and MP restoration, gold (guilders), experience and just because hitting things is fun. *Ni No Kuni* has a surprisingly large overworld for a JRPG and we loved that the waystones (the places to replenish HP/MP and save) and loot (consumables, accessories, weapons and armour) were always plentiful.

There's no easy way to say this, so we'll just say it: the enemies in *Ni No Kuni* are basically *Pokémon 2.0* and you'll have a love/hate relationship with them as they ambush you across the world and in dungeons. When within range these little bastards will



Multiple choice: what's worse – a punch in the pills or a **kick in the nose lantern?**

Ah, Studio Ghibli. Even your **rats with wings have whimsy**



"Hey, Ollie, hook a dripper up **with a leaf, or a page from your book**"



"Hey kids! **We's eatin' tonight**"

attack you if they are confident they can tear strips off of you. But if a weaker foe catches a whiff of your awesomeness, they will hightail it, disappearing before you can so much as pull your gauntlet off, much less throw it down. That said, you can always sneak up on them and catch 'em with their yellow bellied pants down, giving you first strike advantage. Your foes, of course, have the same option open to them as well. Expect to be mugged while you're standing around drinking in the landscape, perhaps trying to spy a craftily hidden *Totoro* or dust bunny Easter Egg.

When it does come time to fight, Oliver and Drippy aren't left alone to save the world. Creatures known as familiars will battle alongside you if you earn them as gifts; or you can just find them in the field, enslave them, and beef them up into fuzzy killers. Training your familiars – well, giving them treats – will have various effects, such as boosting abilities or battle skills, known as tricks. Familiars can learn up to eight tricks which can then be assigned slots to be used in battle. You have to choose which tricks you want before battle as there are limited slots and if you want your familiar to learn a new trick you'll have to ask them to forget one of their old ones.

Better yet, you can equip Oliver, the 200 odd familiars out there, and other

companions with weapons, armour and accessories you find or buy. You can also evolve the physical form and ass-kicking abilities of your beasts if you give them super-special treats, like steroids [citation needed].

All battles occur on a 3D field, and are a hybrid of real-time and turn-based sensibilities. You give Oliver, or your familiar, a command and they'll carry it out. There's a small window to cancel and replace those orders (typically when you see your foe charging up the spell from

hell). Cooldowns stop this from becoming a no-brainer button-masher but a deft hand is required to quick-dodge attacks and scoop up MP and HP glims that pop up randomly on the battlefield.

It's refreshing that winning a battle isn't wholly dependent on the superiority of levels or sweet equipment, rather your attention to the tide of battle and ability to rapidly adapt to the role required. You may need to switch between evading, distracting, becoming a defending tank, or even the deliverer of coup de grâce. ▶



Dear Bubble Boy, we're **predicting some problems with your weapon choice**



Crane stance: **If do right, no can defense**

Team selection becomes paramount later in the game when you're joined by three human companions that can be switched between by tapping **△**, and you can easily set how non-controlled characters should react to threats. Between your human compadres and all your familiars, battles quickly get intense and dazzling.

What's equally impressive is that *Ni No Kuni* is just as engaging an experience when you're outside of battle. It's an absolute pleasure to explore the many towns and talk to their denizens who either pay lip service to classic nursery rhymes, or the Internet's obsession with cats. Every inch of these metropolises are daubed with the classic-yet-kooky style the Japanese are so fond of, but *Ni No Kuni* never devalues itself by shoe-horning in saccharine sweet characters for the purposes of blatant merchandising. See: *Final Fantasy XIII-2* and *Mog*.

Amidst the very colourful cast you'll

find all kinds of shops and side-mission opportunities. Of particular note is the Swift Solutions errand board which offers an overwhelming amount of diversions, including our favourite: bounty hunts that require you to eliminate specific fuzzballs. You'll also find yourself wholly consumed by the merit book which fills up with stamps when you've completed tasks. Fill up a few cards and you can exchange them for merit awards, which are potent new tricks and power-ups.

On the topic of awards, Studio Ghibli deserves one, if not several, for the enchanting visuals it's delivered in *Ni No Kuni*. On top of the funny looking NPCs that only a few tokens on the Caterpillar's hookah could've produced, Oliver and your party members are superbly animated. There are also myriad minor details here that will please those who take the time to notice. Staircases aren't textured ramps; Oliver's feet adhere

to each step properly. And the noises in a marketplace, which first appear to be a wall of sound, is actually perfectly lipsynched and keyframed to the many, many individual creatures making the din.

But what impresses the most is how Level-5 has defied the irritating Japanese tradition of having drab, lifeless environments. This world is as massive as it is richly detailed and full of life. Forget the pursuit for photo-realism, *Ni No Kuni* is, without a doubt, one of the best looking games on the PS3.

It's a shame then that the bulk of conversations you make aren't voiced; a lot of them are just the standard two line text whilst the character's silently mouth their lines. These scenes can be quite lengthy and sometimes in the absence of Hisashi's wonderful background music the dot dot dot sounds of these conversations can get on your nerves and tempt you to skip right the hell past them. That said,



"Hey kids, you should always look both ways bef- **"Screech"** "Thump"



"Hey kids, I'm not **creepy at all**"

"Drippy, we're pals and all, but a time comes in every friendship when **one person must skin the other for gloves**"



"I choose you, Pikachu— **oh crap, lawsuit**"



Pigmen, Jerry. **Pigmen**

"Ni No Kuni is, without a doubt, one of the best looking games on the PS3"

all the major moments are well acted and voiced. The lip-synch is perfectly serviceable providing you don't look too closely – an occupational hazard of any anime experience, really.

In the West the Japanese Studio Ghibli productions are often and unfairly dismissed by filmgoers as children's fare. As a gamer you should not make the same mistake here with Ghibli's first major foray into interactive entertainment. Children may be drawn in by the inarguably classic beauty that is the Ghibli art style, however there's a very respectable RPG thrumming underneath. Boss battles are definitely challenging, and some fairly nefarious puzzles will place *Ni No Kuni* beyond the skills of the little-uns.

There are no guns, breasts or F-bombs to brand this a 'mature' game, but parents unfamiliar with Studio Ghibli's movies should understand that these pretty colours hide convoluted and mysterious plot twists and adult themes that create a heavier tone than your average Disney production.

Couple all that with Level 5's mastery

of the JRPG genre and you're looking at everything you could want in a game; a breathtaking world to get lost in, wonderful characters, a fun tactical combat system, hours and hours worth of quests, puzzles and more booty to grab than a live stage show of *Magic Mike*. *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch* is gaming at its most magical and only the hardest of hearts will not be spirited away by it. **Ayeisha Gunning**

Lol, cats

Visit any branch of Swift Solutions, hand over your completed cards and you'll reap your awards. Some of the best awards come from Ding Dong Dell, a charming little city that is populated, wall to wall, with cats (and also a lot of wells to fall down, we imagine). If you feel tired (or just need time to pass) you can take a nap here at the Cat's Cradle which is a chain of 'purremium' inns run by a plump 'Purrprieter' who – yeah you know what? You get the idea. There's so much cat love in this game Level-5 could have shipped it with a ringworm warning on the box.



"Welcome to Stab Face Glen! **Can I interest you in our local customs?**"

Final Say

PRESENTATION A lush world with impressive draw-distances, painstaking detail and animation that blurs the line between anime and arse-kicking rpg.

SOUND Ollie is a relatable kid burdened with none of the usual Japanese melodrama. Features an absolutely sumptuous score.

CONTROLS Battles feel fast and fluid despite their hybrid turn-based nature. Sensible menus make for a slick, tactical experience.

REPLAY VALUE Expect 20-40 hours for a conservative run. 60 hours if you tackle the side-quests and 100 hours for total completion.

Verdict

A return to the salad days of JRPGs. Engaging, addictive and utterly beautiful. A must-play.

9

LEGO Lord of the Rings

My precious

You have my bow. And my axe!
"And my plastic phallic object!"



Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: PLATFORMER

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER

BROS. INTERACTIVE

ENTERTAINMENT

DEVELOPER:

TRAVELLER'S TALES

PLAYERS: 1-2

RRP: \$79.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
LEGO STAR WARS

We were there when the strength of LEGO men failed. We were also there when it came time to build a fellowship (without boxed instructions), to crap bricks during the siege of Helm's Deep, and to sneak 'the one block to rule them all' back into the Mt Doom playset. We've thrown away an epic adventure in a sentence just now. One does not simply platform into Mordor.

In truth, *LEGO Lord of the Rings* was placed into our PS3 with a groan and a roll of the eyes. We walked away from it many hours later with a grin goofier and more permanently affixed than any LEGO head piece out there. A decent LEGO game lives and dies on the adaptability and broadness of its source material's appeal, and the last LEGO adventures, based on the Batman comics, simply didn't suck us in. Telltale was onto a winner with the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* licenses, and *LOTR* proves to be a perfect snap-fit, too.

Though the formula hasn't exactly been built from the green ground piece up, Telltale has gone above and beyond our expectations. Take, for example, the fact that Middle-earth is one gigantic, seamless hub world that can be trodden across (or fast traveled through) from one end to the other. Theoretically you can backtrack all the way from inside



After consuming all the mead Legolas became legless and **LEGOless**

the Black Gate, filled with brimstone and horrible orcs, back to The Shire, filled with clueless bogans, and discount boob jobs [citation needed]. LEGO fans saw a similar sprawling world in *LEGO Batman 2*, but in *LOTR* there's a much better balance between linear story missions and a sandbox packed with secondary paths to inspect, side quests aplenty and fragile, beautiful LEGO fauna to raze for studs.

Traveller's Tales does a great job of recreating the movies by sampling the actual lines from the films, and it dovetails well with the typically addictive puzzling, combat and silliness. The irreverent humour is carried across into the many, many items you can create – such as mithril trowels, Gandalf fireworks, or a phial that triggers a rave party. You can also expect a lot of laughs in the recreations of key scenes from the movie, like a stealth section where you must hoik crap at local wildlife to distract stalking Nazgul, or you can turn orcs into shrieking, chunky bits as you make that last ditch ride out of Helm's Deep.

LEGO Lord of the Rings isn't the best LEGO game ever made – it's marred by sketchy sampled voice acting and character/item selection could be more streamlined. But those minor quibbles won't massively affect the average player's run through this delightful interpretation of this beloved IP. If 30-odd hours of smacking bricks, and slapstick shtick is your idea of heaven, collect this without delay. **Adam Mathew**

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Moments that offer surprising scale and cool camera work. The adaptive two player split can irritate the eyes.

SOUND Stirring official soundtrack, but also the occasional muffled soundbite from the actors.

CONTROLS Belting things and jumping about is as understandable as ever. Changing between eight characters and as many items gets fiddly.

REPLAY VALUE Seven hours will knock over the story missions, then 30 or so can be spent collecting and doing sidequests.

Verdict

One of the best LEGO games in years. You shall not pass it.

8



"Your group is more like the fellowshit of the ring!" Oh great, they have a cave troll

Target prioritising 101: aim at the most distant guy who's running off to the toilet

Killzone HD

Not worth the PTSD

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: TBA

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: GUERILLA

GAMES

PLAYERS: 1 - 2

RRP: TBC

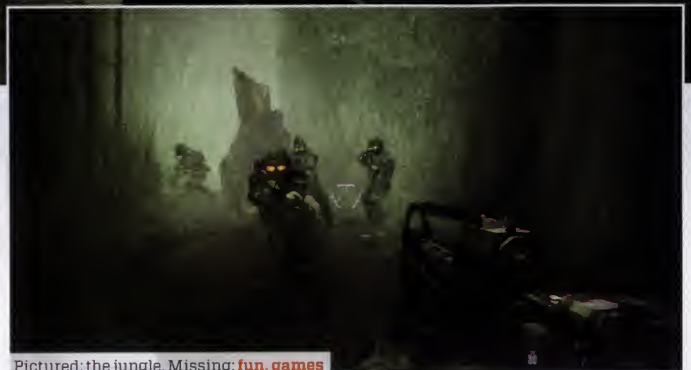
► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
ORGASMIC DEATH SCREAMS

It's been eight years since we entered that very first 'killing zone'. Looking back at it across a vast, octo-chasm of time sure ain't pretty, even with our Helghast-issue, glowy rose-tinted goggles on.

In an era over-saturated with WWII shooters, Guerilla Games had the balls to step up and *not even scratch the mold* with its war between the Interplanetary Strategic Alliance (space Allies) and the evil Helghast Empire (space Nazis). With those belligerents established *Killzone* proceeds to lay on the 'finest hour' melodrama, which while pretty engaging back in the day, now feels like a dodgy parody called *Saving Space Cadet Ryan*.

The unintentionally amusing tone isn't helped by the half-arsed 'HDifying' of *Killzone*'s less-than-timeless visuals. Curiously, the guns you hold and the character models have definitely been tweaked to look better, the environments themselves don't look improved whatsoever. We appreciate that the planet Vekta offers more visual tones than the frigid, poo-brown wastes of Helghan, but more often than not the textures look washed out and objects often fade into existence in an ugly manner.

The emptiness of some of these levels is mirrored by a very barren soundscape. Most of your missions don't go beyond ten minutes or so, but even in that short amount of time one notices that *Killzone* has an almost eerie silence that's shattered by the sound of gunfire and what sounds like one actor playing



Pictured: the jungle. Missing: fun, games

'Helghast Dude, numbers one through 12'.

Things have improved a little bit in the gameplay department. *Killzone HD*'s framerate is way more stable than the PS2 version ever was, and we enjoyed the option to play as one of four characters: Jan Templar (stock standard ISA soldier), Luger (sneaky assassin), Hakha (spy on the inside) and Rico Velasquez (the heavy-hitter who's compensating for something). The members of this foursome aren't massively unique, but they do offer a few cool tricks that will allow you to better play to your tastes.

You won't need to agonise over which character to choose, as there's a better than average chance the enemy AI will do your job for you. We noticed a few times when these crafty bucketheads would take cover on the wrong side of an object. Meanwhile, our AI buddies were happy to charge enemy lines, stand out of cover and soak in a luxurious shower of bullets.

When you really get down to it, *Killzone* was pretty overhyped back in the day. The PlayStation brand hungered for a truly kick-arse, console exclusive shooter and this was Guerilla Games' first wobbly baby step towards that. *Killzone* is only for the most curious of fans who want to see what the franchise was like before it got good (see: *Killzone 2*). Everybody else should dodge this draft and enlist elsewhere. **Adam Mathew**

Final Say

PRESENTATION A very uneven HD remake. Drab, repetitive environments. Moleman draw distance.

SOUND Comical voice acting (beyond Visari) and a script cheesier than a Swiss food festival.

CONTROLS Stupidly antiquated until you customise the buttons. Even then it's pretty clunk-orrific.

REPLAY VALUE Split-screen multiplayer will hold your attention for seconds. US online multi stripped right out.

Verdict

An awkward, unnecessary 'remastering' that's for the diehards only.

5

"Big Fan. Big Service. I love it!"



Anarchy Reigns

Mainly on the pleigns in Speign

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FIGHTING

RELEASE: JAN 10 2013

DISTRIBUTOR: FIVE STAR GAMES

DEVELOPER: PLATINUM GAMES

PLAYERS: 1 - 16

RRP: \$49.95

▶ PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:

BAYONETTA, GOD HAND, CHAINSAWS

It's difficult to know how to approach a game like *Anarchy Reigns*. In short, the problem is this: how can you talk sensibly about a multiplayer game when you can't find anyone else to play it with? There's a single-player campaign, and some reasonably competent bots, but when it comes down to it *Anarchy Reigns* is designed to be played with other people.

We just couldn't find any, and it's been out in Japan (as *Max Anarchy*) since July this year.

Well, that's not strictly true. We managed to find a few games the last time we tried, all one-on-one cage matches against high level Japanese players who brutalised us with

effortless efficiency. So yes, there are people playing *Anarchy Reigns* – but there's not a lot of them, and they're all a million times better than you.

The terrible shame of it – and the dilemma for us – is that it's pretty obvious *Anarchy Reigns* would be incredible if only it could only attract more players. Battling it out with the bots, we often saw glimpses of what could've been, and were always left wanting more.

Picture this: a cybernetic pigman, fire-fisted pimp, and chainsaw-wielding leather daddy are fighting it out with a hulking mechanical bull and humourless Russian cyborg in front of a black hole crackling with cosmic energy. Cybernetic pigman picks up the flag and attempts to flee the chaotic melee, but humourless Russian cyborg grabs him by the scruff of his flabby neck, holds him aloft like a captured animal, and electrocutes him.

Pigman drops the flag and Comrade Killbot goes in for the grab, not reckoning on the fact that leather daddy is there waiting for him, chainsaw at the ready. One brutal bit of slice-and-dice later and daddy dearest has his eyes on the prize, only to find that he has stumbled within the radius of the aforementioned blackhole. Struggling in vain against

the vortex, he can only watch as hulking mechanical bull snags the flag and makes a run for the capture zone. Fire-fisted pimp, it turns out, was beaten to death with a road sign.

With bots, moments like these are a tantalising rarity, but with other humans they could well be the norm. The thing with real people as compared to bots is that they have a sense of spectacle and an occasional tendency to forsake victory for the sake of fun. Having a punch-up on top of a dilapidated tenement during an air raid is not the most strategic thing to do, but it's totally awesome anyway so who gives a shit? Bots don't get that. A real person might.

The single-player campaign is decent enough for what it is, which is a glorified training ground for multiplayer. The story is divided into two parts, each with a different protagonist, consisting of four chapters apiece. Each chapter takes place in what's basically a big multiplayer map – the only significant difference being the presence of nondescript goons to practice your combos on. There are missions, boss fights, collectables and whatnot, but they're ornamental, existing only to provide purpose and structure to the core activity of learning how to play the game.



New genre discovered: **Pants-Down-Action-Adventure**



The Transformers, they'll punch you 'til you die



Japanese overload in 3...2...



We love what you did, but you know that you're toxic



Pigman lets rip, tears space time

“Fire-fisted pimp, it turns out, was beaten to death with a road sign.”

Ironically enough, combat in *Anarchy Reigns* is a measured affair, requiring a solid sense of rhythm and a good eye for opportunity. Attacks are divided into light, heavy, special, and throws, each with their own modifiers. Because all the characters share the same basic moveset, they are distinguished from each other chiefly by their size, speed, and choice of special weapon. Taking to the battlefield with a hulking behemoth like Big

Bull or Garuda is a very different experience to playing with one of the more agile characters.

Another way characters are distinguished from one another is of course their appearance, which is uniformly exaggerated and willfully absurd. A few of the female fighters are uninspired titty vixens, and the aforementioned cybernetic pigman is just outright obnoxious, but by and large the cast is remarkably charismatic and easy on the eye –



Upgrade your old human can to a robutt 4000, today!

which is unfortunately more than you can say for the rest of the game.

It's not that the environments are ugly per se, it's more that... well, no, they are pretty ugly actually. Just drab and featureless and depressingly utilitarian. Fine, we get it, it's a post-apocalyptic wasteland – but does everything have to be so grey and brown? It's really quite strange in a way. How does the studio responsible for a game as visually exuberant as *Bayonetta* make a game where something like 25% of the multiplayer maps are essentially concrete boxes?

We would dearly like to recommend *Anarchy Reigns*. Like *God Hand*, from which it draws considerable inspiration, it's a fiercely inventive, elegantly designed, and brazenly original game that makes absolutely no apologies for the fact that most people probably won't put in the time and effort necessary to appreciate it.

Who knows? Maybe it'll do well enough in the west to spawn a dedicated community. We genuinely hope so, because the raw potential of this game is phenomenal. It could be so awesome... if only people would give it a chance. **Dan Staines**

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Gorgeously designed and richly detailed characters stand in stark contrast to the drab, featureless environments.

SOUND A funky selection of original hip-hop makes for pleasant (and maddeningly catchy) background music. Voice-acting is overwrought, but passable.

CONTROLS The lock-on system is a bit wobbly, but otherwise the interface is intuitive and tightly designed.

REPLAY VALUE With people? Endless. Without people? Very little. Bots matches are good for maybe a week or two.

Verdict

Packed full of punchtastic potential. Cool with the right crew.

7



Far Cry 3

Rumble in the jungle

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL

PLAYERS: 1-14

RRP: \$89.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
DISHONORED, FAR CRY 2

Hands down, *Far Cry 3* is one of the most brutal games you'll play this year. Forget about gunning down waves of soldiers in *Call of Duty*, skewering Brits in *Assassin's Creed* or even killing innocent civilians in *Spec Ops: The Line*. You haven't felt true revulsion until you've hunted down a pack of dogs with a flamethrower and burned them all to death, just to earn a buck.

The story certainly doesn't start that way. You are Jason Brody, a young man on holiday on Rook Islands in the South Pacific with your friends, having the time of your life. A wayward skydive sends you into the arms of some truly psychotic soldiers who are taking over the islands in order to peddle a lot of drugs. After one of the best intros in videogames we've ever seen you're soon on your own, and learning to fight back as you rescue your friends.

It's a fantastic opening, and the hours spent becoming familiar with the world are among the best in gaming. Everything feels ratchet tight, and the systems of learning new skills by levelling

up, skinning animals and helping the locals take back pirate-held outposts all fold into one another. You're soon at a classic conundrum: spend a skill point going down this path and get a flashy new takedown, or increase defences and recover health quicker?

Then there's a crafting syringes for health buffs, and using animal skins to make bigger pouches to stash weapons, loot and syringes. A large portion of your time is spent juggling all these demands, as well as unjamming radio towers to open up the map.

It's not all perfect. Half way through the 15-or-so-hour campaign the story takes giant lurch and you're on a whole other island with more toys to play with, and another big bad guy to take down. It's almost as though there were two stories planned for *Far Cry 3* and they've been fused together. Get past this clunker and an awfully implemented and frustrating stealth mission though and you'll be loving it again.

Single player's one component but it's definitely the drawcard. Four-player co-op has its own story which mostly sidelines the open world in favour of tighter, more controlled missions. Multiplayer's fistful of modes are primarily team-based with a few interesting buffs bestowed on your character. While the map maker's a great tool to have as it sets the game apart, the bevy of wonderful opportunities in single-player is the real reason to get this.

Over the last 12 months we've seen a huge variety of shooters come and go, but *Far Cry 3* is, like many other shooters, an adventure game in the first person. It is superb. Live with its flaws and you'll have the time of your life. **Paul Taylor**



Final Say

PRESENTATION Minor graphical glitches and a choppy frame rate slightly sour a huge, lush world that's full of surprises.

SOUND The low growl of a tiger or the weird hiss from a Komodo dragon will have you petrified when you're trying to hunt them.

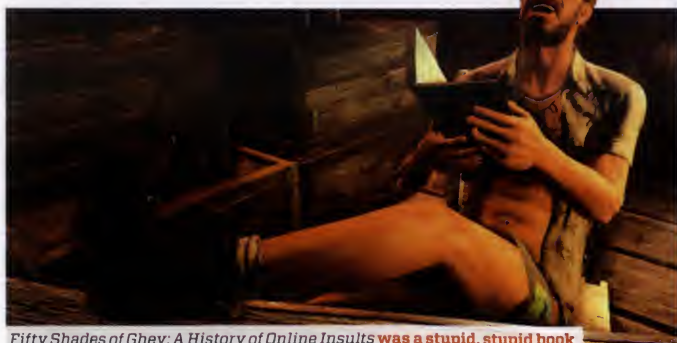
CONTROLS Weighty without being sluggish. Also features a robust and satisfying driving model.

REPLAY VALUE Loads to do with two endings. You'll spend hours mopping up all the hunting and bounty challenges.

Verdict

Brilliant in concept, truly great in execution despite a few stumbles. A must own title.

9



Fifty Shades of Ghey: A History of Online Insults was a stupid, stupid book

The Mako: built like a brick toilet block, handles like its contents

Mass Effect

Make more space in your collection



We PS3 owners got a fairly rude introduction to the *Mass Effect* series. Our obsession had to start with *Mass Effect 2* and a downloadable comic book that glazed over the events of the original *Mass Effect*, the epic space opera that never saw release on our ebony obelisk of power. Though it's five years late to the punch, EA's decided to right that wrong.

The original *Mass Effect* is now available separately on PSN, or in the *Mass Effect Trilogy*. The latter seems to offer ludicrously good value for money as a mere 90 of your Earth dollars will net you three of the best sci-fi games ever made, and a smattering of free (on-disc) DLC. For *Mass Effect* you'll get *Bring Down the Sky*. *Mass Effect 2* also features a mere handful of DLC, like *Cerberus Network*; *Kasumi*; *Overlord*; and *Lair of the Shadow Broker*.

That sounds like a lot of stuff, but it actually isn't. There's a wealth of DLC that isn't being included for free in this pack, which makes the trilogy a pretty tightfisted offering. We've therefore chosen to ignore *Trilogy* and focus on a

dedicated review of the standalone PSN version of *Mass Effect*.

As an interactive story it's one hell of a good piece of entertainment. Taking your first tentative steps into this seriously rich universe, planting the seeds for larger implications later in the series, and tangling with one of the best antagonists ever, Saren, is a trip well worth taking. There's a rich, colourful cast you'll want to meet for the first time (Urdrnot Wrex in particular) and very poignant moments to be had (e.g. becoming a Spectre). These are watershed gaming moments that *ME2*'s 'introductory' comic book could never hope to encapsulate.

A great yarn may be eternal, but the same timelessness cannot be applied to gameplay. Unlike the blasterrific *ME2*, the original offers a fairly equal dosage of traditional RPG and third-person shooting. If you're coming fresh from *ME3* that means noticeably clunkier combat, but considerably wider avenues to tailor-make your powers, armour and guns. Completionists can also expect to drive around a lot, doing battle and busywork in a temperamental moonrover called the Mako. Those making a conservative run will have their time wasted in elevators; Bioware's disingenuous solution to loading screens.

Should *Mass Effect* be played in 2012? That's like asking if *A New Hope* should be seen if you started with *Empire* and *Jedi*. Technically, yeah, you've seen all the best stuff already, but there's always merit in experiencing that lean, inagural production which sowed the seeds of greatness. If nothing else, this is your excuse to continue on and replay two epic sequels in the way they were originally intended. **Clint McCreddie**

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RPG

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: BIOWARE

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$14.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:** STARS, WARS, TRILOGIES



Put this villain under pressure and you'll soon smell Saren nerve gas

Final Say

PRESENTATION The digital acting is a little bit more stunted in spots, but only the most anal of you will find fault here.

SOUND Has a wonderful, often haunting score and some exemplary voice performances. Case in point: Jennifer Hale's portrayal of FemShep.

CONTROLS Combat requires a lot more menu pausing than *ME2* and *ME3*. The Mako frequently handles like a three-legged space dog.

REPLAY VALUE One run as a Paragon can be followed by a New Game Plus as the bad-arse Renegade.

Verdict

Slightly aged visuals and combat, but amazing storytelling and more in-depth RPG elements.

8

Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed

But why can't we be Mr. X from Streets of Rage?

Get out and **run** you lazy blue bastard



Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: FIVE STAR GAMES

DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL

PLAYERS: 1-8

RRP: \$49.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
"SAY-GAH!"

SEGA aren't what they used to be. Back in the day, these guys went head to head with Nintendo in the console wars, and went hard. In a strange little way, Sumo Digital's second riff on the SEGA-fied racing franchise is a reminder of how far the once-mighty have fallen.

It's kind of sad. At first, you only have 10 racers to choose from, with 12 more being unlocked as you burn through the World Tour (which is pleasingly lengthy). Thing is, only a handful of these racers

are in any way iconic or, at the very least, recognisable. Sonic? Totally. Beat from *Jet Set Radio*? Hmmm. AiAi and MeeMee from *Super Monkey Ball*? Uh, okay. How about Danica Patrick from *Stewart-Haas Racing*?

The hooning that ensues is heavily derivative of both *Mario Kart* and also *ModNation Racers*, copping the funky weapon pickups of the former and the screaming drift mechanics of the latter. It plays just like you're imagining, with the added gimmickry of the "Transformed" bit in the title giving rise to certain moments where your car will literally transform into a hovercraft (boring) or jet (radical).

The flying parts are very, very cool (you can even barrel roll for kicks), but it's the tracks themselves that are the game's true all-stars and arguably save it from being a total write-off. All based on SEGA classics and cannily designed, oddly enough, they're a reminder it was always about the games for Say-gah, not the fluff. The *After Burner* tracks especially kick ass. **Toby McCasker**

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Japanese arcade-level dazzling, and them characters have lots o' character.

SOUND Pumping and kind of conducive to taking dru- you're driving, be an adult.

CONTROLS Nice and simple, with noticeable handling diffs between drivers. Pick Sonic.

REPLAY VALUE It has local matchmaking for online, but we think the community will thin quickly.

Verdict

Not a bad little racer, but kind of depressing.

7

Silent Hill: Book of Memories

Part Plunder-Book, part Chunder-Book

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DEVELOPER: WAYFORWARD TECHNOLOGIES

DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: \$49.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
TORCHLIGHT, GAUNTLET

WayForward Technologies, the quiet achievers of work-for-hire video game development, have now directed their adaptation know-how to bringing the *Silent Hill* to PS Vita.

As with their recent *BloodRayne* 2.5D side-scrolling beat-em-up, *Book of Memories* is something of a departure for the series. Instead of a free-roaming 3rd-person survival horror adventure, we get a top-down brawler with timed combo belting, super-attacks fuelled by power meters, and a density of secondary missions, challenge stages, and item-

grabbing more in line with an arcade brawler than a thriller.

This genre compromise may seem, at first, a tad off-putting, but it works. Factoring in the size of the PS Vita screen, and the fact that players will typically be enjoying sporadic chunks of action on public transport, the WayForward imagineers have created a valid new way to experience the *Silent Hill* 'vibe.'

While the game mechanics borrow from *Diablo*, the scarcity of health kits and the rapidly-degrading weapons foster a sense of nervous tension and malingering doom. The graphics engine is equal to the task of bringing sinister foundries and deformed nurse monsters to life, and the music is outstanding.

While the combat and XP-grinding work well, a few aspects feel a little off. It's too easy to bump the touch screen and dismiss important game text and there isn't much story to speak of, either.

WayForward seems to have saved its 'A Game' for their own IP. *Book of Memories* feels odd, as though a *Diablo* has murdered a *Silent Hill*, and is traipsing about wearing its skin.

James Cottee



Known in our office as *Silent Thrill: Book of Mammaries*

Final Say

PRESENTATION Fiddly menus, conventional top-down brawling with a hint of 'Metroidvania'-style exploration. Plenty of character customisation. Long loading times.

SOUND Above average. Haunting folk rock and pathos-drizzled piano solos imbue a heady dose of American Gothic.

CONTROLS Solid. The back pad is instrumental in spell attacks.

REPLAY VALUE There are plenty of secondary goals to meet and rare weapons to unlock and co-op for up to four.

Verdict

A competent, workman-like dungeon-crawler.

7



LEGO Lord of the Rings

How did it come to this?

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: PLATFORMER
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES
PLAYERS: 1-2
RRP: \$49.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
 GOLDEN AXE; BEAST RIDER

This adaptation of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy delivers an experience entirely in line with the last few years' worth of LEGO-ified spin-offs. Scrolling beat-em-up stages are marked by simple puzzle challenges, riddled with secret areas, and peppered with objects that can only certain unlockable character classes can interact with, thus ensuring additional replay value for obsessed completists.

Occasionally the action will be punctuated by a boss encounter that re-creates a scene from the films, such as that memorable battle where Gandalf reflected three of Saruman's slow-moving fireballs back at him.

Amusing and inoffensive, it's a winning

formula. The only problem here is that the PS Vita version has a serious case of port-itis. Symptoms include itty-bitty characters and platforming elements that have clearly been optimised for living room-sized flat-screens, and noticeable compression artefacts in the full-motion video and spoken dialogue.

The texture quality also varies widely, breaking the illusion, and creating a jarring effect every time a jumbo-pixel cloud floats by.

If you seek a handheld action-adventure experience with oodles of unlockables and crisp, readable graphics, you may do better to wait until the AU release of *Retro City Rampage*.

James Cottey

Final Say

PRESENTATION Cut scenes closely mimic their movie counterparts, with added slapstick and JPEG jaggies.

SOUND Soaring orchestral scores lifted straight from the movies add sparkle to even the simplest fetch quests. Noticeable compression degradation in some of the voice-overs, however.

CONTROLS Movement and combo attacks are handled via conventional buttons and joysticks, with the odd bit of knob-twirling for quick-time events.

REPLAY VALUE Levels are short, as is the overall campaign, but each level has hidden items that can only be accessed via unlockable characters.

Verdict

This flawed port offers scrolling beat-em-up action from a bygone era.

6

Spy Hunter

You don't have to yell Michael, I'm all around you

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER: TT FUSION
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: \$49.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
 TWISTED METAL

Was anyone really clamouring for another *Spy Hunter* reboot?

This one ditches Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, instead focusing purely on the combat and driving of the original, updated for a modern audience: or, at least, a modern audience circa 2005. *Spy Hunter* looks like it belongs on ye old PSP.

It feels better than it looks, though. Your car has four weapons, one attached to each of the face buttons, and every campaign level involves driving as fast as you can while blasting away at all kinds of other vehicles that are out to cause you harm. More weapons are unlocked as you go, and testing them all out in combat

situations is fun...to a point.

Unfortunately, there's just not a lot of meat to *Spy Hunter*: the campaign is a decent length, but rarely does it go anywhere new or interesting. This isn't the sort of game that requires strategy or nuance, and failing a mission – which happens often, as the difficulty tends to spike in places – means replaying the whole damn thing, which is a big turnoff.

There are touch screen gimmicks peppered throughout and an ad-hoc only multiplayer to try if your mates are into masochism. Nothing here elevates this above the many other pointless reboots we've played. James O'Connor

Final Say

PRESENTATION The graphics wouldn't look out of place on the original PSP. It's pretty drab and flavourless.

SOUND Nothing stands out (except for some weird, campy voice acting), but nothing offends, either.

CONTROLS Your car has a nice feel to it, although things can get a bit ropey in tight situations and in off-road sections.

REPLAY VALUE You'll likely ignore the multiplayer, but the campaign goes for a decent length. The lack of checkpoints is annoying, though.

Verdict

A misguided attempt at a reboot. It's fun in dribs and drabs, and will please fans of vehicle combat, but don't go into it expecting big thrills.

5



Raise awareness. Car flatulence is killing our ozone layer

No caption joke required. Funny already



Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse

Giggity

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER: HEAVY IRON

STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1 - 4

RRP: \$79.95

▶ PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
GROSS OUT HUMOUR

Ah, *Family Guy*. Your often sickening hilarity has fuelled many a classic night of shared YouTube guffaws 'round the Macintosh derpfire. As a show and with the possible exception of *South Park*, you are without comedy equal. As a game, you are as funny but also terrible. You're a totally unremarkable third-person shooter, and the only people who'll stick around to check out your modest, Christmas cash-in trappings are the fans.

Multiverse is so true to the show it's amazing. Lois drunkenly inviting nearby frat-boys to "finish on her C-section scar" aside, what you get in a practical sense is a verrry slim but amusing Story Mode starring Stewie and Brian as they trip through the multiverse in a bid to thwart a surprisingly not-dead Bertram's plans for sweet revenge. You also get a bizarre multiplayer that can only be played locally with up to four players, and a Challenge Mode that's boring as batshit but the only place you can troll around as epic supporting characters like Quagmire, Mayor West, and even Death.

Which isn't such a great loss, seeing as every character is basically the same. They all have a selection of ranged weapons both fitting (Stewie's death ray) and not (Lois'... syringe gun?), a melee attack (Brian's whiskey bottle, Meg's Wolverine fingernails), a limited explosive you can hurl (Peter's dangerously unstable can of Pawtucket brew), plus an infinite buff that needs charging after each use and

is just about the only thing that sets them apart (Quagmire's blow-up doll shield is a fave). The details are spot-on, but the execution is bland and unbalanced, especially in multiplayer. While all of them will eventually be able to unlock a full rotisserie of killin' tools, some characters seem to start on the back foot (Chris's bow and arrow sucks). Not that you'll be spending much time here as it's not equipped for online play, which is totally insane but here we are.

There are more immediate giggles to be had in the Story Mode, which is rib-tickling to wade through, although "wade" is definitely the word. It really just boils down to running around dodging either projectiles or up-close *Family Guy* caricatures, like angry college guys with deadly melee bongs. Then you either cap 'em or bash 'em, and maybe collect a few things while being funneled towards your next inane but comical goal.

Again, it's the unerring faithfulness to the show that'll see you through, not the game itself – and you simply must play it in co-op. It's clearly been designed to accommodate two peeps making trouble with Stewie and Brian at the same time, evidenced by the fact that if you're going it solo, they share a life bar and this is just a complete nightmare.

It could've been worse, but it could've been a lot better, too – drop the *Family Guy* skin and what's left is supremely lightweight boredom that costs money.

👉 **Toby McCasker**

Final Say

PRESENTATION It's a backhanded compliment, but this is the best thing about the whole deal. Offensive cartoonage FTW.

SOUND The entire voice cast are on board and on fire. The show's theme song is even in there, too. Genuinely hilarious.

CONTROLS Elementary third-person stuff with a primitive shine. No cover system, mandatory auto-aim, and a camera that sometimes hates you.

REPLAY VALUE No online for its multiplayer. Absolutely half-assed stuff, and could've really improved things.

Verdict

Scores more points than it deserves 'cos the fan service is just that good.

6



SONY
make.believe

Smart As

Brain freeze

Observation: **this game is ordinary.** Now hand me my High Distinction



Info

FORMAT: PS VITA

GENRE: PUZZLE

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: XDEV EXTERNAL
DEVELOPMENT STUDIO

EUROPE

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$39.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
KURUSHI

Well, it's 2012, and Sony has finally jumped aboard the brain training bandwagon. *Smart As* turns your PSV into a portable quiz machine, dispensing daily puzzle salvos designed to measure and sharpen your cognitive skills in the fields of language, arithmetic, observation, and logic. Controlled entirely via touch screen and tilt controls, *Smart As* dares you to complete words, solve simple sums, move cubes around, and so forth, guided all the while the by the rasping and mildly sarcastic voice of John Cleese.

Scores are tabulated and tracked over time, so you can assess your strengths

and weaknesses.

Every item of on-screen paraphernalia is rendered as a chunky 3D object, even the back arrows. It's all running under the Unreal Engine, yet despite the indisputable power of the PS Vita's hardware the game responds sluggishly to your commands. The loading screens all wear out their welcome, and the games erratic character recognition code makes the segments where you trace letters and numbers on the screen needlessly aggravating.

The music sounds like it's been lifted from a corporate training video, and the polished white landscape rendered in the background looks like the kind of abstract pocket universe *Doctor Who* might wind up in if he entered the wrong co-ordinates into his time machine.

Smart As supports Facebook, Twitter, and 'near', so you can share your humiliatingly low scores with friends and strangers alike.

It contains everything you'd expect of a middle-of-the-road puzzle game, and it's executed competently. But the creators of this game suffered from a paucity of ambition. There is a tsunami of innovation crashing through the worlds of online and interactive learning, *Rocksmith* being but one example.

Smart As could've been designed to teach you something useful. But all you'll learn by playing it is how to waste your time. **James Cotte**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Puzzles and menus are utterly inoffensive. Objects are rendered with soothing colours and rounded edges.

SOUND The background music is remarkably unremarkable. *Monty Python* veteran John Cleese supplies the voice-overs, but he sounds at times distracted, disinterested, and displeased.

CONTROLS Puzzles are solved via the front and rear touch screens, and via tilting. Letter and number recognition is sluggish and unreliable.

REPLAY VALUE *Smart As* is designed to be played for a few minutes a day to keep your neurons sharp. Most of the puzzles can only be unlocked via a long-term commitment.

Verdict

A competently executed brain trainer that is tainted by a very lacklustre engine.

6

When Vikings Attack!

No problem. Pass me that convenient atom bomb.

Info

FORMAT: PS3/PS VITA

GENRE: PUZZLE

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: CLEVER BEANS

DEVELOPER: CLEVER BEANS

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: \$15.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
SPAM, SPAM, SPAM

In reality a Viking horde was not so easily beaten back by hurling presumably still-occupied ambulances at them. What the, that sounds awful. Well, yeah. But it is hilarious, and is but one of the very many things your motley crew of 1970s British caricatures might bowl over a horde of anachronistically-invading Norsemen with.

They're everywhere, and they're throwing stuff at you – you being a

steadily growing/dwindling crowd of random, rag-tag defenders. The more people in your crowd, the bigger and more devastating objects you can launch at the Vikings, but the slower you'll move about. As you catch glancing or full-on blows from the Nordic anti-socialists, you'll start to lose people. This'll let you move faster to give you more of a fighting chance, but stops you from picking up the very best in civilian heavy weaponry.

Aside from chucking things, you can also dash – useful for stealing throwables right out of the opposition's meaty hands or even catching objects mid-air as they sail right at you. The physics of the objects themselves are awesome, bouncing all over the place with parts breaking off that you can then also throw.

Needless to say, this is easy to learn but an ever increasing bastard to master. You'll often get blindsided with an unbelievably involved level, or a specialised new weapon, or a fiendish boss battle. Let's never speak of The Pipe Factory boss again. **Toby McCasker**



Final Say

PRESENTATION Adorable and highly comical. The jolly old Brit vibe is just perfect.

SOUND The dopey music suits the deranged premise, but we never wanna hear "Ow, me back!" again. Do you even lift?

CONTROLS Fluid and super-responsive like they need to be. You won't miss 'cos of the controls.

REPLAY VALUE Online multiplayer, rafts of collectables and really hard solo challenges demand you return to defeating Olaf and Erik and to a lesser extent Sam.

Verdict

Nice one, **Clever Beans** – this is how you do "casual."

8

FACT: Vikings married **Viqueens**



Screenshot or drug relapse? **You decide**

Pro tip: **buttstomp the spikes** to win at all of the games


Pid

Piddles a small puddle near a big pond

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: PUZZLE

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: MIGHT AND DELIGHT

PLAYERS: 1-2

RRP: \$15.95

PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
LIMBO, BRAID

Pid is deceitful. It comes at you all waxy graphics and little boy protagonist, with enemies that look like Easter Island carving rejects. Cool, you think, a new artistic game for me to brag to friends about playing. But therein lies the deceit. *Pid* is difficult, about as difficult as trying to tie your shoelaces while holding seven full shopping bags. Much like said analogy, it's not really much fun.

It's weird, too, but that's to be expected from arcade releases these days. The central gameplay mechanic is the ability to flick out little gems that throw

out beams of light in a straight direction. These beams act as gravity elevators – so, for example, if you chuck one on the ground you'll travel upwards inside the light beam, if you put it on a wall you'll be sent horizontally and if you whack one on a sloped surface you'll travel diagonally. Most levels are traversal puzzles that rely on mastery of this simple mechanic to get from A to B.

The problem comes from all the stupid annoying enemies that hound you incessantly during that journey. Difficulty spikes pierce your enjoyment and make what could have been a relaxing, dreamy journey one full of frustration. That said, if you enjoy swearing a lot at the TV and getting "you should stop playing this" looks from your spouse, *Pid* might be worth your time. **Dylan Burns**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Goes for the popular "less is more" feel. Minimal tutorials, text speech bubbles and large control indicators at certain points.

SOUND Muted and ethereal soundtrack, with lots of tremolo guitar and slow piano. No talking in the game and so-so sound effects.

CONTROLS There is a slight floaty/delay feel to the controls, which makes the fast enemies, homing rockets and other nasties a little unfair on the player.

REPLAY VALUE There are stars to collect, but no real incentive to do so. We guess you might like to speed run it or something.

Verdict

A forgettable little puzzle game that has some charm but does little to stand out.

5

Midway Arcade Origins

Retro torture


We have vivid memories of stoking over these gfx. **Clearly we were idiots**

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER

BROS. INTERACTIVE
ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER: MIDWAY

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: \$39.95

PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
NOSTALGIA TRAPS

"YOU ARE THE WEASEL MAN! YOU SHALL ABSORB TOTAL PAIN!" So intones a random flashing message during the excessive retro 'shmup' *Total Carnage*, one rare highlight of over 30 arcade kickbacks from the '80s on this disc.

Games just didn't care at all back then, did they? We whinge nowadays about the steady monetisation of gaming, but *Midway Arcade Origins* is a potent reminder that we have it great compared to the mullets and fluoro of three decades

ago: these score-based moneytraps were designed explicitly so you'd keep jamming in those coins. They're impossibly hard, give you almost no leeway to make any mistakes, and can be insanely unwieldy in a way that feels intentional. *Marble Madness* was the real reason Patrick Bateman killed those hookers.

Some of 'em are just downright unplayable with the PS3 controller, with *Vindicators: Part II* being the worst example of this. With the exception of *Defender* and *Gauntlet*, there's very little here that could be considered classic – and definitely not much you'd probably want to play for more than two seconds. There are some gems: *Arch Rivals* was *NBA Jam* before *NBA Jam* was *NBA Jam*, *Pit-Fighter's* awkward digitised biff is strangely compelling, and *Smash TV* rules like O'Doyle.

Thus, a museum of oddities with a word to gaming's sociological naysayers: back then, you could only choose to be a generic Aryan guy, a generic black guy in bitchin' shades, or a scantily clad woman with heaving bosoms. *Midway Arcade Origins: Chin Up, Look How The '80s Suffered*, surely. **Toby McCasker**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Set the graphics to "Clean," that's the best. Bafflingly, you can't play anything full screen.

SOUND You will consider throwing yourself through a plate glass window. Don't. You are beautiful inside.

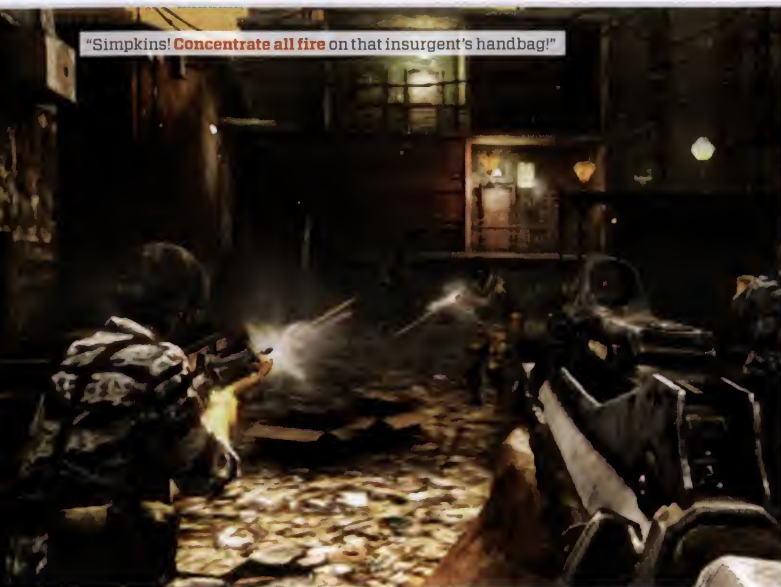
CONTROLS Horrendous for anything more complex than moving in four directions and holding a button to shoot.

REPLAY VALUE The actual "play" value is low enough already without having to make yourself utter, "The horror, the horror."

Verdict

It ain't great. A compilation of old hits you wouldn't want to waste your TV time on.

3



Call of Duty: Black Ops Declassified

A black day for the PS Vita

Activision currently has six developers working on *Call of Duty* games. As such, their decision to outsource the series' Vita outing to Nihilistic Software – a developer whose track record is spotty at best – is a bit of an odd one. The team previously produced *Resistance: Burning Skies*, a game that proved that they knew how to make a shooter on PS Vita function, but not how to make it entertaining. *Declassified* follows in these footsteps, utilising the same solid control scheme while drastically cutting down on ambition.

Instead of a proper campaign, all you're offered here are 10 extremely short single-player 'Operations', akin to the Spec Ops challenges from the *Modern Warfare* series. They could be all finished in under an hour if it weren't for the infuriating lack of checkpoints; you're forced to start each mission all over again if you get killed or fail an objective. Objectives vary, but essentially each mission boils down to clearing the level room by room, all with less pizzazz than the series usually manages. These

missions are served up alongside a bunch of dull time-trial training areas and five 'Hostiles' levels, which are incredibly repetitive wave-based challenges that all get boring within five minutes. *Declassified* actually manages to capture the 'feel' of *Call of Duty* pretty well, as the mechanics are solid and the shooting is often quite fun. But the A.I. is brain-dead, the levels aren't interesting, and nothing truly exciting ever happens. In any case, nothing could have saved such a fundamentally limited progression system.

Multiplayer could perhaps have been a highlight if it didn't feel so redundant. It's restricted to 4 on 4, and although a decent chunk of modes, guns, perks and kill-streaks have been carried across, the level design is uniformly forgettable and the all-important sense of precision just isn't there. The online code is atrociously unreliable too, bumping you back to the menu more often than it lets you into a match, which often causes the game to crash when you try to load multiplayer back up. If you didn't splurge on a 3G Vita, it's not likely that you'll ever find yourself in a situation where you want to play *Call of Duty* online and this is your best option.

Declassified feels like a disappointing DLC bundle rather than a full release. In its best moments it proves that *Call of Duty* could work on the console, and it has some good ideas – earning XP across single-player for multiplayer unlocks is particularly neat – but it's exceptionally hard to justify how this ended up with a \$70 price tag. The very best PS Vita games have proven that, in the portable market, size can still matter. This lesson has, ironically, been ignored by gaming's biggest franchise. **James O'Connor**

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

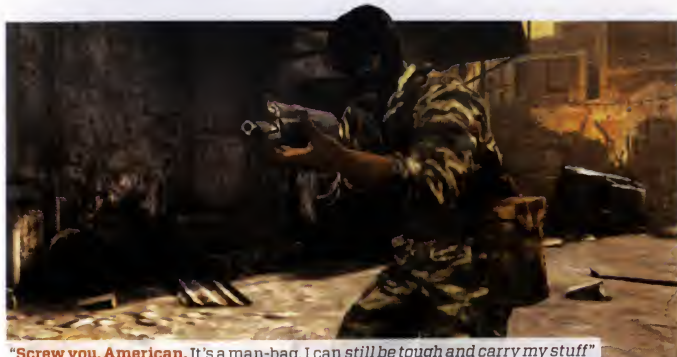
DEVELOPER: NIHILISTIC

SOFTWARE

PLAYERS: 1 - 4

RRP: \$69.95

▶ PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
WASTED OPPORTUNITIES



Final Say

PRESENTATION Load times are a pain and there are unskippable cutscenes at the start of each level. The graphics are decent, though.

SOUND The sound levels seem a bit off; this is a softer *Call of Duty*, when a little extra bombast would have gone a long way. Voice acting is decent, but the script isn't.

CONTROLS Essentially the same as *Resistance: Burning Skies*. They're a little loose and awkward, but pleasantly snappy when you jump into your gun's sights.

REPLAY VALUE You might be able to squeeze a few hours of it if it's the only game you got for Christmas, but the campaign is incredibly short.

Verdict

It has promise, but these operations should have remained classified.

4

Playstation All-Stars Battle Royale

Is that a roll of 10c pieces in your pocket, or...



Info

FORMAT: PS VITA

GENRE: FIGHTING

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: BLUEPOINT GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: \$54.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
THE PS3 VERSION

Sound Shapes may have been the game that introduced Cross Play – which lets you play a single game across both the PS3 and Vita with synced saves – but it's *Playstation All-Stars Battle Royale* that currently stands as Cross Play's greatest ambassador, simply because it's a full retail release. Purchasing a PS3 copy of the game grants you a download code for this version, which is functionally identical. It's a generous deal that adds a bit of value to the overall package, although the game is

available by itself on PS Vita for a bit less if that's all you're after.

The game feels right at home here. While it may not exactly push the PS3 to its limits, seeing it run on the PS Vita's 5 inch OLED screen is still extremely impressive. The camera keeps track of the frantic action perfectly, and although a little impact is lost the fidelity of the whole package makes up for it.

Otherwise, everything we said in our review of the PS3 version holds true here. The fighting system is relatively strong, accounting for early button-bashing while eventually opening itself up for mastery, but it's somewhat lacking in fan service.

The single player content is a tad thin; Story Mode is a bore, and although you can have some fun setting up random fights and playing through the simple trials the game offers, it's really designed to be played with friends. With this in mind the game's portability is either a blessing or a curse depending on your gaming habits.

► **James O'Connor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION It looks wonderful on the PS Vita screen, although, like the PS3 version, it could be a tad more cohesive.

SOUND Not all of the original voices made it in, but the tunes are mostly correct to the franchises they come from.

CONTROLS The touch screen has been worked in to pick up items, which is a natural fit. It's best played with the D-pad.

REPLAY VALUE It's hard to say how much play this will get at tournaments just yet, but it's a solid PS Vita fighter if you're after one.

Verdict

On the off chance the PS Vita is your only console and the PS3 review won you over, you're safe with this version.

7

WRC 3

Clunky wrench

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: AFA

INTERACTIVE

DEVELOPER: MILESTONE

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$69.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
DIRT, A BIT OF MUD TOO

If you're looking for a proper rally game on PlayStation, one with seasons that follow on in the same country, and damage that knocks on to the next race, the recent *WRC* series has been your only choice. It's been a bit scrappy but at least it's been authentic. *DiRT* has the looks but sacrifices the authenticity purists crave.

This third effort in the series has taken notes on how popular *DiRT* is and copies liberally, but it's a poor facsimile, as though someone has described



Why we **never** wear bullseye shirts to rallies

what's made *DiRT* so appealing without actually showing it. As a result *WRC 3* misses *DiRT*'s sense of style and weighty presence when you're behind the wheel, or the way that cars are connected to the track and a hair-raising sense of danger. Thrashing through winding roads is limp when it should feel like a wrong move means watching the wheels come off as the car kisses the walls.

Of course, it's developed on a budget but it's not all bad. You can see the improvements in the car models compared to the years before, and the hardcore audience of the sport – the handful that there are – will appreciate *WRC 3*'s spirit to following the source material. Everyone else looking for slip n' slide action should load up *DiRT 3*.

► **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Tries to copy *DiRT* but stumbles. Drab is the best word for it.

SOUND Dubstep does not equal modernity. Effects lack punch and feedback of tyres spitting out gravel.

CONTROLS Cool cars, pity about the way they handle. It's not very tactile, and that's a big problem.

REPLAY VALUE 16-player multi is a boon, if you can find likeminded sorts. The career mode is challenging.

Verdict

Its makers are keen – with more time or resources this could be excellent. Rally fans will tolerate it, though.

6



The great **Blu Loo** flood of '86 gave many people the shits. Literally



Science enriches our lives yet again

Info

FORMAT: PS3/PSP/PS VITA
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: BEATSHAPERS
DEVELOPER: HALFBRICK/BEATSHAPERS
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$6.95

▶ **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKED:**
 CANABALT, SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2



Final Say

PRESENTATION Clean and simple - needs to be as when you get up to 3,000m-plus the world whips by. Weird slow down at the very start is a minor hiccup.

SOUND Hummable stage music will get stuck in your head. Mute it if you like, you're not really missing out.

CONTROLS So simple even your one-handed, single-digitated grandmother could play it.

REPLAY VALUE Absolutely insane. Tonnes to collect and heaps of rewards to earn. Will keep you very busy.

Verdict

Accessible, engrossing and deceptively simple. A future Aus-made classic.

10

Jetpack Joyride

Learn to fly

Finally, *Jetpack Joyride* has been on smartphones and tablets for some time now; a perfect example of a 'casual' game but one that's layered with rewards and reason to come back, and back, and back. We've often thought this Australian-made, award-winning title would be the perfect addition to the minis library. We were right.

However, if you already have it on your smartphone or tablet there's little reason in getting this again, beyond having the game on PS Vita. Sure, there are a few graphical tweaks here and there, but other

than that it's the same package.

Not that that's a bad thing because *Jetpack Joyride* is brilliant. The purpose is simple: get as far as you can in this never-ending lab. Your highscore is your badge of pride. Press **X** to fly. Do nothing and Barry Steakfries will keep running. That's the extent of the controls. Just beyond the edge of the screen a randomly-placed assortment of lasers and rockets is waiting to zap and blow you up. Dotted amongst them are coins and icons to collect. Coins will buy a clever array of gadgets like a magnet that collects

more money, posthumous distance modifiers, clothes to dress Barry in, and other augmentations. Icons instantly dole out vehicles that also act as a shield. No two playthroughs are the same, so each round is a sheer test of skill rather than muscle memory.

There's never been a game that's begged for 'just one more go' like *Jetpack Joyride*. While it's geared towards sessions that last for less than five minutes at a time you'll spend hours going for the in-game badges. We can't recommend it enough. **Paul Taylor**



BreakQuest: Extra Evolution

FORMAT: PS3/PS VITA/PSP **GENRE:** ACTION
RELEASE: OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** BEATSHAPERS
DEVELOPER: BEATSHAPERS **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** \$6.95

Another brickbreaking *Arkanoid*-style game, but instead of neatly arranged levels and predictable patterns you're thrust into stages where you might be bouncing the ball off flowers, ropes and other items that will keep you guessing where the hell the ball's going to go, and also what you have to hit. It's anything but predictable, which is good, and there's lots to see, which is great, but it's also a bit sluggish, which isn't.

Verdict

Colourful and eclectic but not much fun. Get *Wizorb*.

5



Alien Breed

FORMAT: PS VITA **GENRE:** ACTION **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** TEAM 17 **DEVELOPER:** TEAM 17 **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** \$6.95

For those with long memories this is the Amiga 500 classic, repackaged for PlayStation Mobile. There's four version of the game in here - the original, the Special Edition, Convergence and Valiance - that are basically map packs. Despite the beckoning call of nostalgia, this hasn't aged well, unfortunately, as it's a real plodder. Valiance is the best of the lot with tighter levels but *Alien Breed* is too damn slow.

Verdict

Gets better with each expansion, but you need to be very patient.

6



Chronovolt

FORMAT: PS VITA **GENRE:** PUZZLE
RELEASE: OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** PLAYERTHREE
DEVELOPER: PLAYERTHREE **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** \$10.25

Take *Monkey Ball* and *Braid* and mash them together. That is *Chronovolt*. Balance your time-travelling ball on skinny platforms, collect keys and make it over increasingly tough obstacles to the finish, meanwhile manipulating elements of the level through time so that they don't crumble, or platforms don't spin around. Sound concept but the awkward camera and menans you spend too much time dancing with the camera.

Verdict

Stressful platforming action made infuriating by a bad camera.

6



Download from
PlayStation®Store

PG

Mild violence, themes and coarse language, Gaming experience may change online



PS3
PlayStation 3



SONY
make.believe

WHAT'S NEW

PSN

DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

The big news this month: System Software Update 2.0 for the PS Vita has arrived, bringing with it PlayStation Plus support and a host of other tweaks and upgrades.

Chief among these is a new and improved Content Manager that allows for simple drag-and-drop wireless file transfers between PC/PS3 and PS Vita. The web browser has also been enhanced, and there's even a special app for sending and receiving emails. Whether or not you'd ever want to use your PS Vita for email is another question entirely, but hey – it's nice to have the option.

In other news, it appears Bethesda may finally be on the cusp of solving the mysterious "technical difficulties" that have impeded the release of new *Skyrim* content for PS3. The *Dawnguard* and *Hearthfire* DLC has been available elsewhere for months now, and with *Dragonborn* due out by the time you read this, the news couldn't come at a better time for frustrated Dovakhiins wanting to slay some dragons on PS3.

"To Update: we're also close on new *Skyrim* content for PC and PS3," the developer posted on Twitter recently. "Thanks to all our fans. We think you'll love the new stuff. We know it takes us time and thanks for all your support and patience!"



It's not Raxel, it's R.Axel. The precursor to R.Kelly

Meanwhile, SEGA fans will be chuffed to learn that *Fighting Vipers*, *Sonic the Fighters*, and *Virtua Fighter 2* will soon be available for download via PSN.

Based on SEGA's famous AM2 chipboard, each game will be a complete port of the arcade original upgraded with online multiplayer and trophy support. While *Sonic the Fighters* is kind of balls, *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Fighting Vipers* are both accomplished brawlers and well worth checking out.

Finally, PlayStation Plus subscribers can get a year's subscription to Music Unlimited for a measly \$13.99 – 90% off the regular price. Bargain!



VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: ARIA Awards 2012 Nominees



HILLTOP HOODS - I LOVE IT (BLUE TONGUE VERSION)

Heavy beats ground the Hoods' lyrics while that chorus will invade your head for days.



BOY & BEAR - BIG MAN

This folksy quartet from Sydney have a dreamy hand-drawn video where flies get their revenge.



BLUEJUICE - ACT YOUR AGE

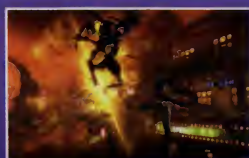
Cheeky Bluejuice make everyone feel a little bit ill with their love story. The tune will make you want to dance.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available **free** on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 30,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY DEMO

Two levels and a monstrous boss fight await in this demo starring re-vamped Dante. We've played beyond that in our preview code and it's looking great!



SINE MORA DEMO

Side-scrolling bullet hell shmup from Grasshopper Manufacture. Yes, the guys that made *Shadows of the Damned*. A radical departure in tone and quality that's all for the better.



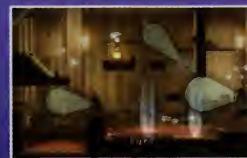
SONIC & ALL-STARS RACING TRANSFORMED

A demo of Sonic and pals tearing up the track in another kart racer. It's gorgeous to look at and feels very tight to play.



NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED DEMO

Criterion's take on the *Speed* series gets better and better. If you loved *Burnout Paradise* and *Hot Pursuit* you'll adore this. Loaded with opportunity for fat powerslides.



PID DEMO

A platform-puzzler presented on a 2D plane where the aim is to manipulate gravity to win. You'll be challenged, but like the best games of its kind the 'eureka!' moment will keep you hooked.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®Network

TROPHY LIVES

You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies.



Jake Petrie

Game: *God of War II*



Trophy: Trophy of Gaia

After hours of torture I finally conquered the titans!



Bastian Dalziel

Game: *Borderlands*



Trophy: And They'll Tell Two Friends.

Ended up in a match with FRICKIN' RANDY PITCHFORD!



Dirk Orreil

Game: *Assassin's Creed III*



Trophy: Eye Witness

Saw a British Soldier getting mauled by a cougar!



GENRE: SHOOTER **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K GAMES **DEVELOPER:** GEARBOX SOFTWARE **PLAYERS:** 1 - 4 **RRP:** \$15.95

DLC > Borderlands 2 - Mr. Torgue's Campaign of Carnage EXPLOSIONS!

If for some reason you missed the *Borderlands 2* bandwagon, start feeling foolish because the latest downloadable add-on, *Mr. Torgue's Campaign of Carnage*, is some of the best DLC available on the PSN.

For those keeping track, this time it appears as though yet another vault has made itself known. Said to open once the champion of Pandora feeds it the blood of the ultimate coward, its presence allows Mr. Torgue (owner of the Torgue Corporation) to kick-start the search for the land's biggest badass within the Badass Crater of Badassitude.

No, we didn't make that up and yes, it's a testament of what's to follow.

Thanks to the injection of even more firefights than usual, the pace is refreshingly quicker and more chaotic. Standard fetch quests remain, but you'll partake in new arena-styled battles as you build up your up your badass rank as well. That's not to mention the surprising addition of a pure racing challenge to test your skills behind the wheel.

We're also happy to report that Gearbox's signature humour and wit is still very much intact, amplified all the more via the fantastic

Torgue himself and his wonderfully juvenile potty mouth. It's amazing how deep Gearbox's well of creativity is considering the size of the main game.

With upwards of six hours worth of content to wade through depending on your inner completionist, Gearbox has once again set the benchmark for future downloadable content. Please sir, we want some more. **Adam Guetti**

VERDICT

A fine addition to an even finer game. Buy it.



PlayStation®Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH / INFINITY WARD **PLAYERS:** 1 - 16

This year's game is a revolution, ditching old conventions as well as lowering the entry barrier to competitive multiplayer. It's never been so good, and Zombies is a fine diversion too.



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS **PLAYERS:** 2 - 8

Excellent. You'll spend most of your time playing Tag and Trailblazer, and while it sounds slim it's indescribably addictive. Believe us when we say it's worth it just for this alone.



JOURNEY

DEVELOPER: THATGAMECOMPANY **PLAYERS:** 2

Alright, so it's limited but you've never played a game like this online. You'll be amazed by the level of cooperation you'll share with your fellow travellers, and it'll remind you that benevolence resides in the heart of strangers.



FIFA 13

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS **PLAYERS:** 1 - 22

Football Club is just one reason to get on board here, where real life and your digital career mesh seamlessly into one. As usual, the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD 3

DEVELOPER: DICE **PLAYERS:** 1 - 24


You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction of storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves, so play friendly or don't play at all.

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II GUIDE

How to beat the Strike Force missions

Call of Duty: Black Ops II's Strike Force missions are a highlight of this year's campaign. They can also be bloody tough. Here are our top tips to get you through. Oh yeah, spoiler alert.

General tips

While it's cool to see the overall battlefield from the tactical view by pressing  the AI does a remarkably awful job: it's always best to switch into the view of one of your units. If a soldier's low on health you can duck and recover for a second.

Even if your soldiers are wiped out, more will come – it doesn't affect how many Strike Force teams you have left overall. However, if you quit a mission you will sacrifice a team.

If you are trying to complete the challenge by only using tactical view, lower the difficulty down to Recruit. It's the simplest way, so don't feel bad about that.

Play like it's multiplayer. Watch your corners and sight lines and you'll be golden.

FOB Spectre

There are three stations to guard in this stage where waves of soldiers, ASDs and drones swarm in, but you only have to keep two stations operational in order to beat the stage. Points A (communications uplink) and B (electrical power station) are close to one another, so split your forces between the two of them and leave C to rot. That way, you can see any invading soldiers from either point, so if one of your teams take a pounding you'll be able to juggle your time between them easily, either by sending a soldier across the yellow pipes [SEE 1] or via the tactical view.

Move both the turrets at points A and B as illustrated by the screens. Although the turret at A [SEE 2] is exposed it will track down soldiers and

ASDs that love to come through the building. The turret at B [SEE 3] will cut down any soldiers that come through the door, and pick off some that lurk behind the railing.

If your teams are being whittled down because the AI is so stupid, zap into the body of a SEAL on the team that has the least number of soldiers left. You might get lucky and end up with five SEALs instead of the usual four when more troops fly in.

Although you'll be able to see off the forces this way, if you do end up inside you should immediately move the turret on the top level onto the slightly lower platform [SEE 4] to give it more leverage. This upper platform [SEE 5] is the best place to shoot the device the enemy plants.



Shipwreck

Follow the capture points in order. A, then B, then C. A will present no problems [SEE 1]

This is a tight and winding map. If you feel like you're getting a little lost, plot a point for your team mates with tactical view then select a soldier and follow the crowd.

Point B is the worst, as you're exposed from all sides. Send in an ASD to draw the flack, [SEE 2] run in with a soldier to plant the hacking module and then defend from an upper level nestled between the shipping containers. While it's cool to control an ASD, and they take a lot more punishment than a soldier, they can't plant the control module to hack the point.

Point C can be a task to get in, but at this point you're ramming it. Once you're there plant the hacking module up against the container on the dock. Keep it as close to the water as possible, as then you'll only have ground forces coming from two directions. [SEE 3 and 4]



I.E.D.

No SEALS on this one, just quads and ASDs, and the high altitude munitions platform (HAMP) to take out choppers, tanks, I.E.D.s and infantry on horseback and in the cliffs [SEE 1]. You'll spend your time flicking between all the units and a lot of time in tactical view, figuring out the route as the convoy constantly rolls forward. The key here is staying in sight of the convoy. Look too far ahead and you'll soon lose one of the vehicles in the convoy.

Quads are perfect against infantry that lurk in the cliffs, and also against the planted I.E.D.s. There are multiple points where you'll need to blow up some explosives on the route. Get there before the convoy stops at an I.E.D. to earn the post-mission challenge. Use a quad to shoot the explosives out of its splash zone, while the HAMP is the best choice to target tanks. ASDs are also great against the choppers if you can spam them with rockets.

As you come through the final valley – the same one from the campaign mission [SEE 2 and 3] – and you'll have to use quads to target RPGs that are hiding in the rocks. If you see a bit cluster of them, send the HAMP to clear them out.

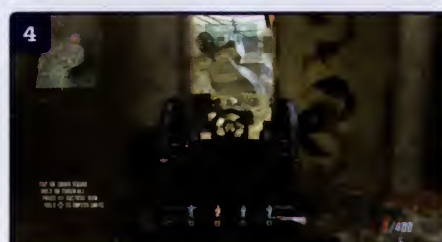
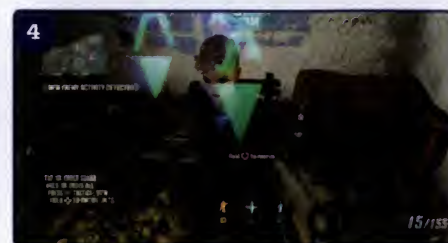
Second Chance

You'll only gain access to this mission if Karma is captured in the mission 'Karma'.

For this snatch and grab you'll need to methodically send your teams into each building to search for her. It's always random which building she's going to be in [SEE 1] so work your way up the map.

Send your teams into the buildings using the tactical view. Sometimes the point of view of the camera can trip you up, so make sure you're flush above it rather than on the usual angle, and send all units to the building [SEE 2]. You can use the gunship to pick off targets outside as well [SEE 3], but once a building's selected you're still better off looking at the map through the eyes of one of the SEALs to scout the rooms and take out enemy soldiers.

Once you've secured Karma [SEE 4] send everyone to the extraction point and use one soldier to follow and protect her. She's prone to getting caught up in a firefight with only a pistol. If everyone around you dies and the only person left is Karma, don't make a stand, just leg it to the extraction point [SEE 5].



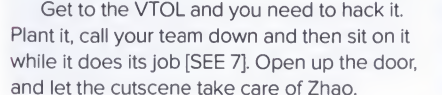
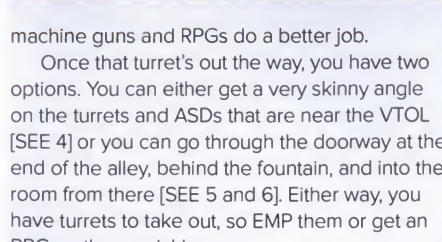
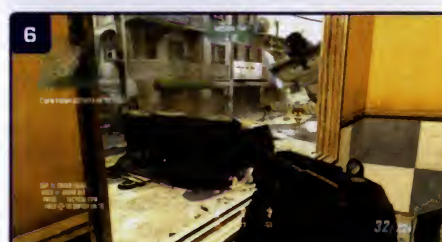
Dispatch

You'll only have access to this mission if you collect all the terabytes of information in the mission 'Fallen Angel' as you're tracking Menendez.

The mission's simple: get from the drop zone to Zhao's downed VTOL at the opposite end of the level using only SEALs.

Forget about going straight down the middle. Although there's plenty of cover the street is wide open, and you can be attacked from all sides. Minimise your exposure by turning right and going down a back alley through the eyes of one SEAL, and planting teams ahead of you [SEE 1 and 2]. This way, you'll be attacked from the front and left hand sides instead of all directions, thanks to the alleys that lead in from the street.

As you wind your way up, dealing with ASDs, you'll have to take out a turret at the very end near the fountain [SEE 3]. Find a SEAL who is carrying EMP grenades and disable the turret before blowing it up. ASDs and turrets can be taken out with rifles and SMGs, but the heavy



machine guns and RPGs do a better job.


Once that turret's out the way, you have two options. You can either get a very skinny angle on the turrets and ASDs that are near the VTOL [SEE 4] or you can go through the doorway at the end of the alley, behind the fountain, and into the room from there [SEE 5 and 6]. Either way, you have turrets to take out, so EMP them or get an RPG on them quickly.

Get to the VTOL and you need to hack it. Plant it, call your team down and then sit on it while it does its job [SEE 7]. Open up the door, and let the cutscene take care of Zhao.

THE PATH TO THE FINISH



There are multiple paths that deviate to the finish of the main campaign. Completing missions a certain way may unlock or restrict your access to the Strike Force missions.

Mission	Decision	Consequence
Pyrrhic Victory	Rescue Frank Woods	This always happens.
Celerium	Recover the Celerium device.	This always happens.
Old Wounds	Resist killing Kravchenko out of hand (mash )	Reveals hints regarding a mole in the CIA, and also generates the file item in Time and Fate.
Strikeforce - FOB Spectre	Clear the Strikeforce Mission	You have to try this to progress. Complete it for a better outcome.
Strikeforce - Shipwreck	Clear the Strikeforce Mission	Complete this for a better outcome
Time and Fate	Find the folder in the Cocaine Bunker about the CIA mole	Woods will suspect something is amiss during Suffer with Me.
Fallen Angel (a)	Record the minimum amount of dialogue about the secret meeting.	Unlocks the Strikeforce Mission Dispatch.
Fallen Angel (b)	Avoid the fire from the gas pipe near the end	Drive to the right, else Harper will be burned (but lives, either way).
Strikeforce - IED	Clear the Strikeforce Mission	Complete this for a better outcome
Karma	Rescue Karma and kill DeFalco.	Fail to rescue Karma and you risk her not being around later, making things worse. However, this also means you open up the Strike Force mission Second Chance. DeFalco will appear in future missions Achilles Veil, Odysseus and Judgment Day, but even if he's not there someone will take his place.
Strikeforce - Second Chance	Clear the Strikeforce Mission	Only available if you bungle rescuing Karma in the previous mission. If you don't rescue her she won't be able to help you later.
Suffer with Me	Shoot the hooded man in the head or the leg.	This will affect the final cut-scene. Only shoot the man in the leg earns a more positive ending, as long as Menendez is killed rather than captured in Judgment Day.
Strikeforce - Dispatch	Clear the Strikeforce Mission	Complete this for a better outcome. Smash the Strike Force missions and the final mission will be easier.
Achilles Veil	Agent Farid or another character are killed.	If Farid dies, the cyber attack will be worse. The upshot is you'll have an ally for future missions. If the other person dies, you'll be running and gunning solo but the events in the story will be more positive. We'd kill the other dude.
Odysseus	Kill or injure Admiral Briggs	If Briggs dies events on the Obama will be worse. Cap him in the leg or arm and he'll be able to save the Obama. Or, don't do a damn thing and you won't have to choose.
Cordis Die	Protect the Madame President.	This always happens.
Judgment Day	Kill or capture Menendez	Capturing Menedez leads to a 'bad' ending (cue Jimmy Kimmel cameo, too). Kill him and Mason will be vindicated.

▶ MUST WATCH

The Dark Knight Rises

(M)

DIRECTOR: CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
STARRING: CHRISTIAN BALE, TOM HARDY, JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT, GARY OLDMAN, ANNE HATHAWAY, MORGAN FREEMAN
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

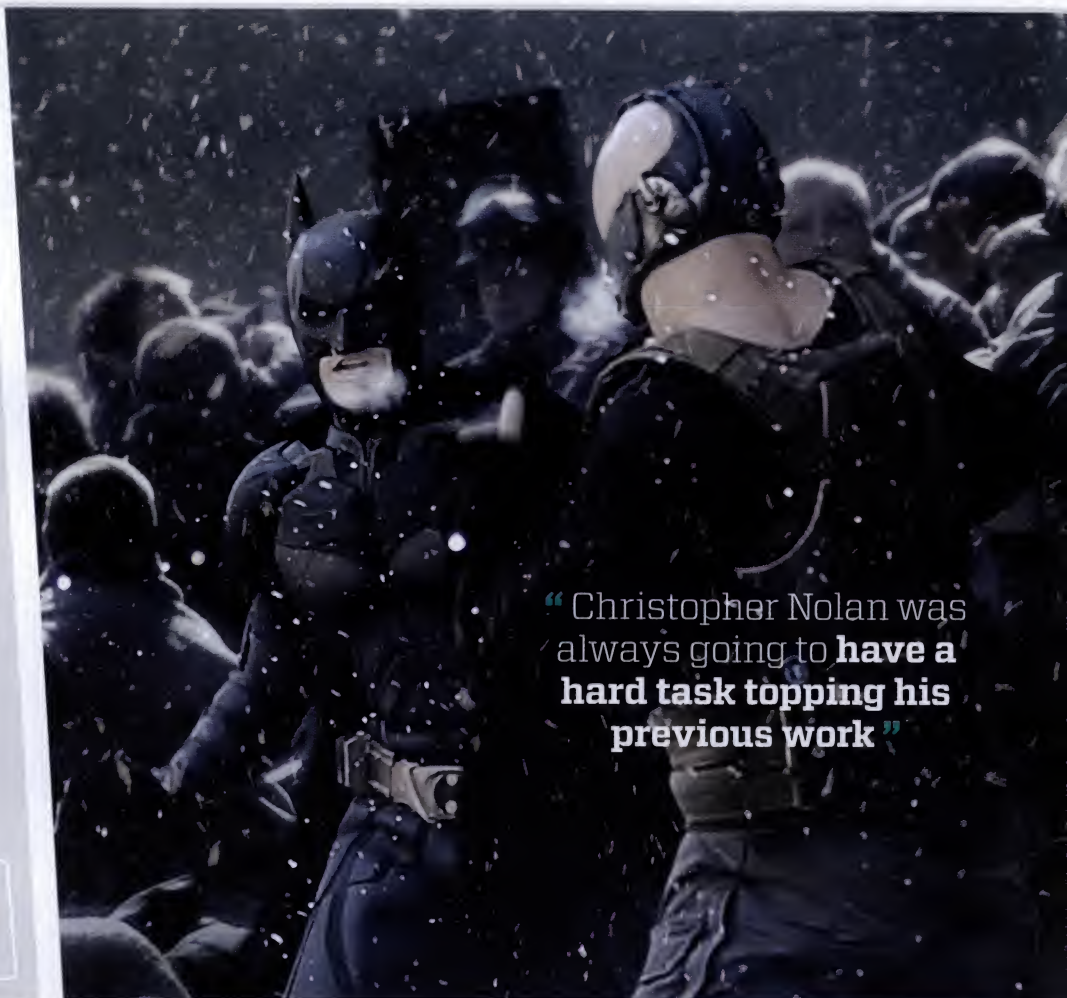
Batman (Bale) all but retired after the conclusion of *The Dark Knight*. Now, a criminal unlike anything he's ever faced has reared up to take over Gotham with the threat of utter annihilation. Forcing himself back out of the shadows, Bats faces the maniacal terrorist Bane (Hardy).

Given the immense success of *The Dark Knight* and *Batman Begins* before it, director Christopher Nolan was always going to have a hard task topping his previous work in this final installment. Nolan does an admirable job tying up (or tucking away) the loose threads, but he doesn't quite reach the heights of *Begins* or *The Dark Knight*. The film drags towards the final conclusion, has several plot anomalies and a very soft ending that may leave fans feeling unsatisfied.

Watch this if you like *The Dark Knight*

Verdict A fine effort but not the swansong everyone expected for the Caped Crusader.

7



"Christopher Nolan was always going to have a hard task topping his previous work"



Ted

(MA15+)

DIRECTOR: SETH MACFARLANE **STARRING:** MARK WAHLBERG, MILA KUNIS, SETH MACFARLANE, PATRICK STEWART
AVAILABLE: (RENT/OWN) \$6.99/\$32.99 (HD), \$5.99/\$24.99 (SD)

Family Guy creator Seth MacFarlane makes his first foray into live-action cinema with *Ted*, the story of a 30-year-old kid, John Bennet (Wahlberg) who still hangs out with his not-so-lovable teddy bear (MacFarlane) that he wished to life. The problem is that John's long-suffering girlfriend Lori (Kunis) needs Ted out of her boyfriend's life in order to move on in their relationship. In many ways, it's like

a long episode of *Family Guy*. Some of the shotgun comedy hits well, while some misses completely.

Verdict Some solid laughs held back from holistic hilarity by a flat love story.

7

PlayStation®Store

▶ TOP TEN

Movies on Demand



- 1 **The Avengers** Walt Disney Pictures
- 2 **The Woman In Black** Roadshow Films
- 3 **Act of Valour** Roadshow Films
- 4 **Battleship** Universal Pictures
- 5 **21 Jump St** Sony Pictures
- 6 **The Lucky One** Roadshow Films
- 7 **Dr Seuss' The Lorax** Universal Pictures
- 8 **The Hunger Games** Roadshow Films
- 9 **The Dictator** Paramount Pictures
- 10 **Safe** Icon Films

Now available to rent or own on PlayStation®Store

The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!





Total Recall (M)

DIRECTOR: LEN WISEMAN **CAST:** COLIN FARRELL, JESSICA BIEL, KATE BECKINSALE, BRIAN CRANSTON, BILL NIGHY **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Loosely based on the film starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, this remake isn't nearly as bad as you've heard. Douglas Quaid (Farrell), a nobody, seeks more out of life so he has fake memories as a covert agent implanted. Unsurprisingly, everything starts to spiral out of control. What is real? What is implanted? Is he a double agent working for the resistance or a ruthless spy looking to wipe them off the planet? Sure, this new version doesn't focus on Mars or have a resistance leader with a little dude popping out of his chest, but the broad strokes are all there. Farrell fits the part nicely as does Beckinsale and Biel in support roles. Even better, the production design is outstanding.

Watch this if you like *RED*

Verdict Big, dumb, stupid and incredibly good-looking fun.

7



Universal Soldier: Day of Reckoning (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JOHN HYAMS **CAST:** JEAN-CLAUDE VAN DAMME, DOLPH LUNDGREN, SCOTT ADKINS, MARIA BONNER **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Yes, the series is still going and moves away from reanimated corpses that kick arse. Instead it switches to a new protagonist and explores concepts of cloning and mind control. The original super soldier Luc Deveraux (Van Damme) is tired of being a puppet and is building an army to free those forced against their will into the universal soldier program. When new lead Scott Adkins lets loose he's a force to be reckoned with, but baring the final showdown these moments are far too fleeting. *Universal Soldier: Day of Reckoning* desperately wants to be *Apocalypse Now*. It wants to be *Memento*. It wants to take you on a journey and blow your mind. It fails on all accounts.

Watch this if you like *Universal Soldier: Regeneration*

Verdict A mess; tries to be too clever for its own good.

5



Bones Brigade: An Autobiography (M)

DIRECTOR: STACY PERALTA **CAST:** STACY PERALTA, TONY HAWK, RODNEY MULLEN, TONY ALVA, STEVE CABALLERO, LANCE MOUNTAIN **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

If you know what skateboarding is, you need to watch this. Simple test: ever heard of Tony Hawk? Following the phenomenon from its fledgling days, *Bones Brigade* is a fascinating look at the youth who helped redefine the sport and take it to a whole new level. It delves into the movement of skateboarding from parks to the streets, the introduction of new, inventive moves that are now commonplace, as each skater tried to outdo each other. It covers the effects on popular culture, but most importantly it discusses what it meant to the skaters interviewed. Effortlessly awesome.

Watch This if you like *Dogtown* and *Z-Boys*

Verdict An absolutely riveting documentary on skateboarding whether you're a fan or not.

8



The Aquabats! Super Show! (PG)

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS **CAST:** CHRISTIAN JACOBS, CHAD LARSON, JAMES R. BRIGGS JR., RICHARD FALOMIR, IAN FOWLES **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

An offbeat fusion of slapstick superhero pantomime, animated shorts, and rock music, *The Aquabats Super Show* feels like a wholesome family entertainment package from another era. The elite members of Orange County's premier novelty ska band star as their super-powered stage alter-egos, fighting villains and their own inadequacies with the power of friendship and low-budget special effects. The show also revels in the Aquabats' alternative media street cred — eps are peppered with amusing fake commercials from the Mega 64 crew. Weird Al Yankovic cameos.

Watch this if you liked: *Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi*

Verdict If Devo were super heroes, they'd look a lot like this. Proof that ska can save the world!

7



Regular Show Slack Pack (PG)

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS **CAST:** J.G. QUINTEL, WILLIAM SALYERS, SAM MARIN, MARK HAMILL, JANIE HADDAD **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

Regular Show is more proof that the American animation scene is undergoing a glorious renaissance. The protagonists are Mordecai (a six-foot-tall talking bluejay) and Rigby (a talking raccoon), park groundskeepers and habitual under-achievers. Episodes all have pretty much the same plot: The fabric of reality is threatened, typically by a technological relic from the '80s (an enchanted synthesiser keyboard, a haunted cassette tape, etc.), and our heroes have to overcome their utter lack of motivation and set things right. Superb voice acting, and memes and quoteables aplenty.

Watch this if you like *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*

Verdict Surreal; a salute to putting in the absolute minimum effort into all life's endeavours.

8



Dennou Coil: The Complete Series (M)

DIRECTOR: MITSUO ISO **CAST:** HOUKO KUWASHIMA, FUMIKO ORIKASA, AKIKO YAJIMA **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

In the not-too-distant future, augmented reality has led to the proliferation of cyber-pets — cats and dogs visible to anyone with a set of AR goggles. A gaggle of young tackers must fight computer viruses taking the form of sinister demonic blobs and infecting beloved family pets with digital lergy, sucking them into cybernetic oblivion. Our teenage heroes deploy anti-virus programs that look suspiciously like beam weapons from *sentai* shows to fight the rapidly evolving threats of this faux ecosystem force. The pace is whimsical and meandering. The tone: Offbeat and irreverent. The content: Intriguing!

Watch this if you like *Summer Wars*

Verdict Shinto meets cyber-space, in a strange new take on the 'Mystery Solving Teens' genre.

8

► MUST SEE

Wreck-It Ralph (PG)

DIRECTOR: RICH MOORE **STARRING:** JOHN C. REILLY, SARAH SILVERMAN, JACK MCBRAYER, JANE LYNCH, ALAN TUDYK **IN CINEMAS:** DECEMBER 26

Wreck-It Ralph is the star of his own 8-bit game of the same name, and you'd think Ralph would be on top of the world. Three decades of playing the bad guy, living in a dump (literally) and eking out a friendless existence has left a gaping hole in his life. Meetings at Bad-Anon, a support group for adversarial game characters, offer little relief. Ralph wants to be a hero.

Going against his programming he abandons his game in search of glory. A chance meeting with a likeminded character has a profound effect on Ralph forcing him to look at his life, what he's given up and ultimately what wants out of it.

Film is a medium that hasn't really ingratiated itself to gamers with some of the most beloved franchises absolutely decimated. The only shining light in recent memory was *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World* and thankfully *Wreck-It Ralph* follows this same respectful route.

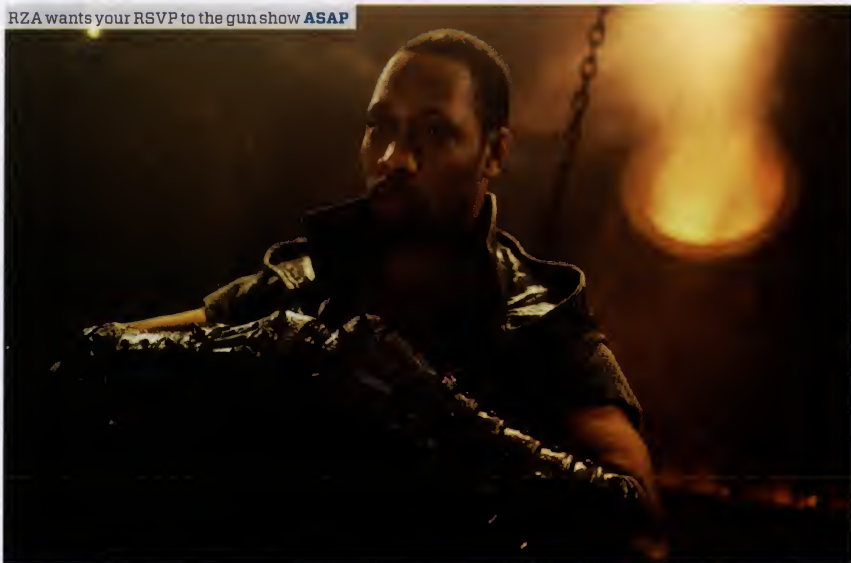
Gorgeously animated and perfectly paced, *Wreck-It Ralph* hits on so many levels, and the video game references weave between obvious and subtle giggle. Heart-warming, laugh out loud hilarious and completely engaging.

Watch this if you like *The Iron Giant*



Cherries: they're the bomb

RZA wants your RSVP to the gun show **ASAP**



The Man with the Iron Fists (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: RZA **STARRING:** RZA, RICK YUNE, RUSSELL CROWE, LUCY LIU, DAVE BAUTISTA, JAMIE CHUNG, BYRON MANN **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

Any fan of the Wu-Tang Clan would be well familiar with their love of all things kung fu or shaolin related. It's a predominant feature in most of their albums, therefore this fists of fury offering from headman RZA should come as no surprise. What is surprising is the quality of his debut outing.

A small village in feudal China becomes the focal point of a group of warring clans when a convoy carrying a king's ransom in gold will be makes it's way through it. Caught in the middle is a blacksmith (RZA) looking to make his fortune forging weapons for any

who have the coin to afford it and retire with the love of his life. Dragged into the conflict and paying a heavy toll for his actions he seeks revenge against those who took what he cherished most.

Taking cues from classic martial arts film of the 1970s RZA shoots with dynamic flair and impressive production values and costumes, considering the modest budget. Pacing does drag in the later sections, but it's still well humoured, (especially Russell Crowe's performance), tightly choreographed and barrels of brainless fun.



"I SAID PUT THE DOUGHNUT IN MY MOUTH!"

End of Watch (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: DAVID AYER **STARRING:** JAKE GYLLENHAAL, MICHEL PENNA, NATALIE MARTINEZ, ANNA KENDRICK **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

Writer/director David Ayer's obsession with the LAPD continues in this confronting thriller. After covering corruption in *Training Day* and the criminally underrated *Street Kings* this is a much more intimate look at the nature of partnerships between those who protect and serve on the mean streets of LA.

Partners Brain Taylor (Gyllenhaal) and Mike Zavala (Penna) are two of LAPD's finest. Eager to rise up the ranks and make detective the duo take risks to make a name for themselves. A routine traffic stop leads to a raid on a cartel stronghold that puts the pair on the organisation's radar. With a bounty on their heads the two must dodge a cadre of opportunists.

Shot predominantly documentary style you're always close to the action as it unfolds. The chemistry between the two leads is astounding with some sidesplitting moments alleviating the tension. As things build to a head the ending brutally leaves its mark in its stark delivery and poignant execution.

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Digital Photography

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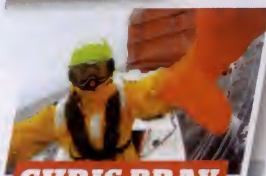
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Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

JAN 2013

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2
Genre: Shooter Distributor: QVS
Date: Jan 1

Anarchy Reigns
Genre: Action Distributor: Five Star Games Date: Jan 10

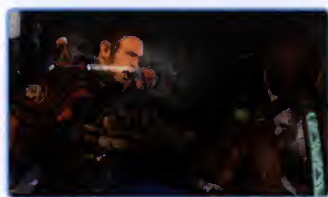
DmC: Devil May Cry
Genre: Action Distributor: AIE
Date: Jan 15



Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch
Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Jan 24

FEB 2013

Crysis 3
Genre: Action Distributor: EA
Date: TBA Feb



Dead Space 3
Genre: Action Distributor: EA
Date: Feb 7

Aliens: Colonial Marines
Genre: Action Distributor: EA
Date: Feb 12

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance
Genre: Action Distributor: Minscape Date: Feb 21



PRE-ORDER BioShock Infinite
Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K Games Date: Feb 26

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time
Genre: Platform Distributor: Sony
Date: Feb 28

Fist of the North Star: Ken's Rage 2
Genre: Fighting Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA Feb

HUNTER EDITION

Crysis 3

Return to the fight as Prophet, the Nanosuit soldier on a quest to rediscover his humanity and exact brutal revenge. Adapt on the fly with the stealth and armor abilities of your unique Nanosuit as you battle through the seven wonders of New York's Liberty Dome!



GET DAY 1 ACCESS TO THE SIGNATURE COMPOSITE BOW

PLUS:

- Early access to the Electric Arrow Attachment
- Early access to the Hunter Nanosuit Module
- Unique composite bow camo skin
- Level 5 XP boost for multiplayer
- Three exclusive dog tags

EA Games \$144 Estimated dispatch date: 14/3/13

The Hunter Edition includes:

- Early access to the new signature C3 Bow to use in multiplayer
- Early access to a bow weapon attachment in multiplayer
- Early access to the "Hunter" nanosuit module in multiplayer
- Multiplayer Head start at Level 5 XP
- Exclusive weapon skin for bow
- 3 x exclusive hunter dogtags



LIMITED EDITION

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

The Limited Edition Includes:

- Exclusive Limited Edition 30cm Raiden figure
- Special DLC code to access the White Armour Raiden (offers increased capacity to carry life-recovery items)

This takes the renowned *Metal Gear* franchise into an exciting, all-new action experience by combining the talents of two world-class development teams, Kojima Productions and PlatinumGames.

EA Games \$198 Estimated dispatch date: 21/2/13

MARCH 2013

South Park: The Stick of Truth
Genre: RPG Distributor: THQ Date: Mar 5



Tomb Raider
Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Mar 5

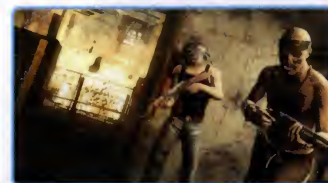
PRE-ORDER God of War: Ascension
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony Date: Mar 14



Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 3
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Mar 31

Splinter Cell Blacklist
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBA Mar

Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel
Genre: Action Distributor: EA Date: TBA Mar



Fuse
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA Date: TBA Mar

APRIL 2013

Injustice: Gods Among Us
Genre: Fighting Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBA Apr

TBA 2013

Grand Theft Auto V
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar Date: TBA 2013

GRiD 2

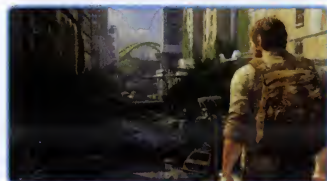
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Namco
Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA 2013

The Last Guardian

Genre: Adventure **Distributor:** Sony
Date: TBA 2013

The Last of Us

Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: Sony **Date:** TBA 2013



Metro: Last Light

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** THQ
Date: TBA 2013

Lost Planet 3

Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ
Date: TBA 2013

Dust 514

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Brothers in Arms Furious 4

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013

Doom 4

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBC
Date: TBA 2013

Arcania: Gothic 4

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** TBA
Date: TBA 2013



Beyond: Two Souls

Genre: Adventure **Distributor:** Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Dragonball Z Budokai HD Collection

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Namco
Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA 2013

Prey 2

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** AIE
Date: TBA 2013

Deadpool

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Activision
Date: TBA 2013



Watch Dogs

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013

Star Wars 1313

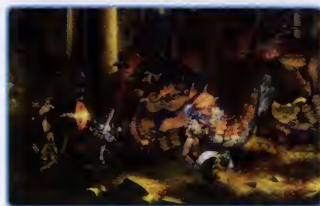
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Activision
Date: TBA 2013

Agent

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Rockstar
Date: TBA 2013

Dragon's Crown

Genre: Action **Distributor:** TBA **Date:**
TBA 2013



Final Fantasy Versus XIII

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Namco
Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA 2013

Persona 4: Arena

Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Namco
Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA 2013

Tales of Xillia

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** TBA **Date:**
TBA 2013



Remember Me

Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: TBA **Date:** TBA 2013

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2

Genre: Action-Adventure **Distributor:**
Mindscape **Date:** TBA 2013

Rainbow Six: Patriots

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Ubisoft
Date: TBA 2013

Devil's Third

Genre: Action **Distributor:** TBA **Date:**
TBA 2013

Warrior's Lair

Genre: Action-RPG **Distributor:** TBA
Date: TBA 2013



Serious Sam: BFE

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Final Fantasy XIV Online

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Namco
Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA 2013

Backbreaker Vengeance

Genre: Sports **Distributor:** TBA **Date:**
TBA 2013

PS Vita Releases

PSVITA
PlayStation Vita

TBA 2013



Persona 4: The Golden

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** TBA **Date:**
TBA Feb

BioShock

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** 2K
Date: TBA 2013

Dust 514

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Final Fantasy X

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Square-
Enix **Date:** TBA 2013

Killzone: Mercenary

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Zone of the Enders HD Collection

Genre: Action **Distributor:**
Mindscape **Date:** TBA 2013

Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Rugby Challenge

Genre: Sports **Distributor:** TBA
Date: TBA 2013

Castlevania Mirror of Fate

Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: Konami **Date:** TBA
2013

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

Genre: Platformer **Distributor:** Sony
Date: TBA 2013

When Vikings Attack!

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Sony
Date: TBA 2013



Phantasy Star Online 2

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** TBA **Date:**
TBA 2013

Tearaway

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Sony
Date: TBA 2013

Sine Mora

Genre: Action **Distributor:** TBA **Date:**
TBA 2013

► COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Aliens: Colonial Marines



The Collector's Edition includes:

- High Quality Powerloader Figurine
- USCM Dossier
- Four Playable Movie Characters
- Additional Marines Character Customisation Options
- Ripley's Flamethrower
- Exclusive Multiplayer Weapons
- Sonic Electronic Ball Breakers
- Phase Plasma Rifle
- Exclusive Game Level
- USCM Academy Firing Range
- Mission Brief
- USS Sephora Schematic
- Recruitment Card
- LV-426 Recon Photo
- USCM Iron-on Badges
- USCM Graduation Certificate.

Created by Gearbox Software, *Aliens: Colonial Marines* is a shooter steeped in the eerie, claustrophobic and terrifying atmosphere that made the *Aliens* films successful worldwide. It's well worthy of motion-tracking.

EB Games \$118 Estimated dispatch date: 12/2/13

index

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 and PSV titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

ACTION

Alien Breed 3: Descent 7
TEAM17
Top-down twin-stick affair that doesn't do enough to improve upon its predecessors.

Armored Core V 5
FROM SOFTWARE
Repetitive and needlessly complex. Building 'bots is cool, though that's about all there is.

Army of Two: The 40th Day 7
EA MONTREAL
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original *Army of Two*.

Asura's Wrath 4
CYBERCONNECT 2
Gorgeous to look at, but there's not much game here and it's packed with QTes. Bleh.

RECOMMENDED Bayonetta 9
PLATINUM GAMES
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

RECOMMENDED Beyond Good & Evil HD 8
UBISOFT
Still one of the most charming games ever.

Binary Domain 7
YAKUZA STUDIO
More than competent shooter with cool ideas and gunplay but embarrassing dialogue.

RECOMMENDED BloodRayne: Betrayal 8
WAYFORWARD
A classy and colourful beat-'em-up that rewards exploration.

Brave: The Videogame 7
DISNEY INTERACTIVE
A family title smarter than the average bear.

RECOMMENDED Castle Crashers 8
THE BEHEMOTH
Violent but classy side-scrolling cartoon RPG-action. Best played in co-op.

RECOMMENDED Child of Eden 8
Q ENTERTAINMENT
You need a Move controller to wring the best out of this weird and wonderful blaster.

The Club 8
BIZARRE CREATIONS
Original, compulsive and fun.

Dark Void 6
AIRTIGHT GAMES
Uninspiring graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.

RECOMMENDED Dead Rising 2: Off The Record 9
CAPCOM VANCOUVER
If you missed it first time around, grab it now.

Dead to Rights: Retribution 6
VOLATILE GAMES
Fine, but doesn't stand out. Needs more dog.

Devil May Cry HD Collection 6
CAPCOM
A bit lazy. 720p gameplay, low-res cutscenes.

Devil May Cry 4 7
CAPCOM
Memorable bosses but prepare to backtrack.

RECOMMENDED Double Dragon 6
NEON
WAYFORWARD
Scott Pilgrim does it better.

Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon 5
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Ugly, repetitive and about 10 years out of date.

El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron 8
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Breath-takingly beautiful and inventive.

The Expendables 2 Videogame 4
ZOOTFLY
A disaster from start to finish. Booooooring.

RECOMMENDED Final Fight: Double Impact 8
PROPER GAMES
Forget about *Magic Sword*; play *Final Fight*.

RECOMMENDED Galaga Legends DX 8
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Bullet hell made pretty.

RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game 9
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Heavy Fire: Afghanistan 3
MASTIFF
A technical travesty. Full of brown.



Hitman: Absolution 9
DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
"Cleverly balances stealth and action for both newbies and long-time fans, while the narrative challenges even the most pacifistic player to pull the trigger."

RECOMMENDED House of the Dead: Overkill - Extended Cut 8
HEADSTRONG GAMES
Has its tongue so far in its cheek it's almost poking out the other side. Requires Move.

Hunted: The Demon's Forge 7
INXILE
A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

Inversion 4
SABER INTERACTIVE
Thoroughly mediocre and wastes what good ideas it does have. A car crash of a game.

ESSENTIAL Just Cause 2 9
AVALANCHE STUDIOS
Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. An insane action game.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days 7
IO INTERACTIVE
Clever visuals, dull game.

Lollipop Chainsaw 6
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Witless, puerile, and irredeemably dull. You'd be right to expect more from Suda51.

NeverDead 5
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
It isn't simply a bad game, but an intentionally bad game with a detestable protagonist.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 8
TEAM NINJA
Violent but ace, despite its age.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 8
TEAM NINJA
A sexy and rock-hard title but the gore's been cut.

One Piece: Pirate Warriors 6
TECMO KOEI
Dynasty Warriors in a new skin. Cool story, but you can play this with your buttocks.

RECOMMENDED Pac-Man Championship Edition DX 9
NAMCO BANDAI
A revolutionary sequel that will put blisters on your eyeballs and thumbs. Hypnotic.

RECOMMENDED PixelJunk 8
Q-GAMES
Old-school fun meets new age design.

RECOMMENDED Prototype 2 8
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
Dumb plot, fantastic gory action. Loads of fun.

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One 7
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Chaotic and confusing with four players, and a bit dull in single player.

Red Faction: Armageddon 7
VOLITION, INC.
Brown, corridor-based action that will leave you snoring. Get *Guerrilla* instead.

RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla 9
VOLITION, INC.
The best destruction effects ever, hands down, with loads to see and do.

RECOMMENDED Renegade Ops 8
AVALANCHE STUDIOS
A sleek twin-stick shooter with split screen!

Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles 7
CAPCOM
On-rails lightgun rehash of *Resi 2* with bits of lore thrown in. The too-shaky camera sucks.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles 8
CAPCOM
Better camera and broader subject matter that includes *Resi 0*. Uses Move.

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City 7
SLANT SIX GAMES
Buggy in single player, but gets better online with mates. Unresponsive and ugly at times.

Metacritic: radical hatred of the games you like

Website: metacritic.com Game: Hitman: Absolution Reviewer: v00d00m4n Score: 0

Don't be fooled by shiny graphics of *Hitman: Abomination* (or *Assassin's Conviction: Saboteur & Lynch - Retardation*), there is nothing good besides graphics. Story may look like [it's a] good one, but in fact it's [a] typical set of Hollywood cliches and yet another plagiarism, this time they ripped off *Leon The Killer* movie. This game is near 5 [out] of 10, but since it's called *Hitman*, and since it's not *Hitman* at all, only 0 [out] of 10.



Retro City Rampage 8

DEVELOPER: VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT
DISTRIBUTOR: VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT
PLAYERS: 1

"A fiendish send-up of *GTA* with more references than you can poke a DeLorean at. Challenging, tight, addictive - and it works on both PS3 and PS Vita."

RECOMMENDED Saints Row 3 9
VOLITION, INC.
Big, brash and unapologetically dumb fun.

RECOMMENDED Scott Pilgrim vs. the World 7
UBISOFT
Distinctly old-school. Needs co-op partners.

RECOMMENDED Shank 2 7
KLEI ENTERTAINMENT
Better combat but disappointing graphics compared to the original. Still cool, though.

NEW Skylanders Giants 7
TOYS FOR BOB
As great as the first game and backwards compatible, but needed to evolve more.

RECOMMENDED Sleeping Dogs 8
UNITED FRONT GAMES
Best-in-class combat and great presentation. You'll absolutely curse the vehicles, though.

RECOMMENDED Sniper Elite V2 8
REBELLION
A few rough edges here and there but the sniping is magnificent. Also, you can kill Hitler.

RECOMMENDED The Simpsons Arcade Game 7
KONAMI
One old-school 'classic' that we could do without. Not as cool you once thought.

RECOMMENDED SOCOM: Special Forces 8
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Great online with Move and a Sharp Shooter.

Spec Ops: The Line 7
YAGER
Tries to depict the horrors of war but fails. Gets better just before the credits roll.

RECOMMENDED Starhawk 8
SANTA MONICA STUDIO
Addictive multi, more than competent splitscreen. Buy it.

RECOMMENDED Transformers: Fall of Cybertron 8
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
This is a must-get for fans. Two steps forward and one step back from *War for Cybertron*.

RECOMMENDED Vanquish 8
PLATINUM GAMES
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

RECOMMENDED Velocity 9
FUTURLAB
A hypnotic racing-puzzler-shoot-'em-up and it's less than \$10. Challenging and stylish.

NEW Wonderbook: Book of Spells 7
SONY
One part readalong, one part Move-wagglefest with a Hogwarts flavour.

NEW Zone of the Enders HD Collection 7
KONAMI
Kojima's mechs-and-melodrama duo are all dolled up but still feels thin.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past you'll feel like this was made just for you.

Alice: Madness Returns 7
SPICY HORSE
Marries great ideas with average platforming.

The Amazing Spider-Man 7
BEENOX
The best looking *Spider-Man* in a long time. Rips off *Arkham City* but lacks the depth.

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
The pinnacle of the series so far.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed Revelations 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Feels more like a (really big) expansion than a true sequel.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed III 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Looks better and is more ambitious than its predecessors with only a few niggles.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods, and even though the sequel's out you need this too.



Batman: Arkham City 10
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. PLAYERS: 1
"Everyone else needs to take note: this is how a superhero game should make you feel. It's endlessly creative, perfectly moody and technically flawless."

Blades of Time 4
GAININ ENTERTAINMENT
Simplistic combat, stupid AI, woeful levels.

RECOMMENDED Brutal Legend 9
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS
Must play, though the RTS bits are a bit crap.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9
MERCURY TEAM
A truly solid romp with tasty combat.

Datura 6
SANTA MONICA STUDIOS
A proof-of-concept Move title that's little more than cobbled-together puzzles. Clunky.

RECOMMENDED Dead Island 8
TECHLAND
Bogus script and ugly but undeniably fun.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 9
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2 9
VISCERAL GAMES
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved 8
NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey*.

ESSENTIAL God of War III 10
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection 9
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO/BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not diminished the impact of these PS2 titles. A must-get.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection Volume II 8
READY AT DAWN
Meticulously updated and pretty to look at.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV 10
ROCKSTAR NORTH
The technical scope and scale of *GTA IV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City 9
ROCKSTAR NORTH
Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and an explosive shotgun? Yes.

Hydrophobia: Prophecy 5
DARK ENERGY DIGITAL
Shoddy game, great water tech.

RECOMMENDED I Am Alive 9
UBISOFT
The game that was retail but now PSN only is dark, constantly tense and very satisfying.

RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS 2 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
While its predecessor felt old this feels fresh.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
You'd have to be a fan to get this and 1-4

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures 9
TRAVELLER'S TALES
A joyous adaptation; one of the best.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7
GAME REPUBLIC
Feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned.

Mafia II 8
2K CZECH
Great when it's on fire but the world feels empty. Has been well and truly bested.

RECOMMENDED Max Payne 3 8
ROCKSTAR
A riveting rollercoaster where each gunfight is a ballet of bullets. Superbly atmospheric.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots 10
KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane.

RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD Collection 9
KONAMI
MGS2 has aged, *Snake Eater* is still all class and *Peace Walker* rocks.

Ninja Gaiden 3 7
TEAM NINJA
Mind you don't impale yourself on the difficulty spike. Fans will lap it up.

NEW RECOMMENDED Okami HD 8
CAPCOM
Got 40 hours spare? Get this. It's absolutely beautiful and has aged spectacularly well.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Harks back to the original Prince. You've been here before and the world's moved on.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction 8
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.

ESSENTIAL Red Dead Remption 10
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
A sweeping epic. Grab the Game of the Year edition for maximum value.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 4 8
CAPCOM
A straight port and not as pretty as it was, but it's still great.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 9
CAPCOM
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 6 8
CAPCOM
Starts out slow and then ramps up. Worth buying for Mercenaries mode.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

Shadows of the Damned 7
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay from two genluses of design. A real shame.

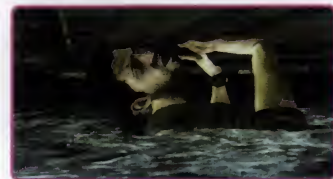
Silent Hill: Downpour 7
VATRA GAMES
True to the pants-browning original, but technical problems and stupid AI tarnish it.

Silent Hill HD Collection 7
KONAMI
True evil never dies; it gets a decent facelift.

Sorcery 7
THE WORKSHOP
A genuinely fun Move title geared towards kids. Fun, lively tone with wink-wink writing.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent 9
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10
NAUGHTY DOG
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.



Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception 10
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-12
"Impeccable in every regard. The action ramps up and up, taking you on foot-chases to teeth-gritting firefights and beyond to stunning set pieces. Totally complements and enhances the other games in the series."

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4 8
CS1 TEAM
One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

ADVENTURE

The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn 6
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
You'll get a kick out of co-op.

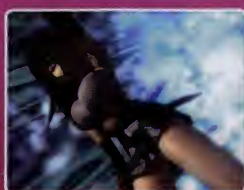
RECOMMENDED Back to the Future: The Game Episode 1 8
TELLTALE GAMES
Fairly simple puzzles but, Great Scott, it looks and feels amazing.

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain 8
QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

Journey 9
THATGAMECOMPANY
Stunningly realised. A game unlike any other and perhaps the friendliest multiplayer.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



FINAL FANTASY VII
DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



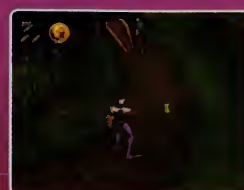
DRIVER
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through cities may be old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PLAYERS: 1
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER
DEVELOPER: EIDETIC
PLAYERS: 1
If you still think *Siphon Filter* was a *MGS* rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



MEDIEVIL
DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO
CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *Medievil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

Codemasters

LOCATION: SOUTHAM, ENGLAND FOUNDED: 1986

BEST KNOWN FOR: COLIN MCRÆ: DIRT

Codemasters' heritage in racing goes back a long way. The company was founded over 25 years ago, and its racing studio has been around for 15 of those. Last year, Codemasters formed a new label, 'Codemasters Racing', signaling its intention for the studio's future.

"Codemasters Racing was formed as a publishing label to recognise that our core business was built around delivering world class racing experiences," says Clive Moody, Executive Producer on the upcoming *GRID 2*. "Codemasters is still the name of our company. Whilst it is true that there has been a hiatus on other genres, that doesn't mean that we will never revisit them; just that we are focussing on racing for the foreseeable future."

It's a good strategy. For the last three generations of consoles, Codemasters has pushed the technical boundaries of racers, tapping into an official licence in the case of *ToCA* and *Colin McRae Rally* on PSOne, and the *V8 Supercars* brand from PS2 remains a firm favourite at OPS. "[*ToCA* and *Colin McRae Rally*] have evolved into series that continue to deliver at the highest level today," says Moody. "*ToCA* feeding through to *Race Driver*, *GRID* and now *GRID2*, with *Colin McRae Rally* leading onto *DIRT*. It's an amazing heritage."

With just under 100 people under its roofs – multiple teams working on different, separate projects at its Birmingham studio and the Southam HQ – Moody believes the company's size, as well as its passion and understanding for the genre, is a benefit to generating fresh ideas. "We are big enough to have the resources to make outstanding AAA titles, but small enough such that everyone involved has a voice, gets listened to, and can make a real difference to the end product."

It's a team that lives and breathes motorsport; one example is Paul Coleman, Chief Designer of the *DIRT* series of games, who often posts on Twitter news regarding upcoming rallies and motorsport events under the handle @Kick_Up.

With a car park often full of fancy cars, they've thankfully never written off or severely dented any used for reference work, "although we have broken quite a lot of our own kit in the process," admits Moody. "Team member's own cars is another matter. We have had some notable wrecks, although mostly at low speeds and fortunately without major injury. It would be unfair to me to embarrass particular individuals, but they'll know who they are when reading this."

ESSENTIAL L.A. Noire

TEAM BOND!

Slow-paced, incredibly detailed and well-executed. Unlike anything else available.

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust

TEAM17 SOFTWARE

An amazing new low for this generation. Not even 'so bad it's good', it's just awful.

RECOMMENDED Stacking

DOUBLE FINE

A truly unique concept and a real brain tickler.

The Testament of Sherlock Holmes

FROGWARES

Slow-paced and challenging, one for those who've always dreamt of being Holmes.

RECOMMENDED The Walking Dead – Episode 3

TELLTALE GAMES

Complex, and arguably the best episode yet. Only available on the US PSN. Sorry.

FIGHTING

Dead or Alive 5

TEAM NINJA

A slick, beautiful mash of fighting polish and icky sleaze, but evolves into a frantic mess.

Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat

345 GAMES

Real people, ridiculous combat. Sun Tzu versus William Wallace? Sure!

NEW Dragon Ball Z Budokai HD Collection

DIMPS

Budokai 3 is a highlight but this is archaic.

The King of Fighters XIII

SNK

Better than *XII* but still crusty.

Marvel vs Capcom: Origins

CAPCOM/IRON GALAXY STUDIOS

Two old titles in one outdated and boring package. Yawn.

RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat

NETHERREALM

A sterling, yet banned, return to form.

Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations

CYBERCONNECT 2

Stunning animation, but the biff is a chore.

NEW PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale

SUPERBOT ENTERTAINMENT

A reliable brawler but the lineup's lacking. It needed more big names – where's Snake?!

RECOMMENDED Skullgirls

REVENGE LABS

Hand drawn characters and gorgeous animation. Wacky and weird but you'll love it.

RECOMMENDED SoulCalibur V

NAMCO BANDAI

Great weapons-based combat for online play, but single player is a bit thin. *IV* still rocks.

10 **RECOMMENDED Street Fighter III – Third Strike Online Edition**
IRON GALAXY
Very different from *IV* and utterly brilliant.

9 **RECOMMENDED Street Fighter X Tekken**
CAPCOM
Ridiculously entertaining and well-made, but the DLC strategy blows.

8 **Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition**
CAPCOM
For first time purchasers only. You'll probably find this or *SSFIV* on the cheap somewhere.

8 **RECOMMENDED Tekken Tag Tournament 2**
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Innovative and challenging. Tonnes of characters, including a few newbies.

8 **RECOMMENDED Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3**
CAPCOM
Blinding action with a roster you deserve.

7 **Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown**
SEGA
Fast and clean, but the tasty extras are DLC.

6 **WWE '13**
YUKE'S FUTURE MEDIA CREATORS
Comprehensively spoiled by sloppy controls. It hasn't improved much on last year, either.

FLIGHT

7 **Ace Combat: Assault Horizon**
PROJECT ACES
Reality-bending fare that lacks depth.

7 **Apache: Air Assault**
GALJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

8 **RECOMMENDED Birds of Steel**
GALJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Hardcore stuff. The *IL2* heritage shines through, but it's not as pretty as it once was.

3 **Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII**
MAD CATZ
A comprehensive failure. Unimaginative, glitchy, and it looks terrible.

10 **ESSENTIAL IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey**
GALJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Packed with little details across the board.

5 **Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters**
TRICKSTAR GAMES
Fifth-rate design and presentation.

8 **RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2**
UBISOFT ROMANIA
Way better mission design over the first title and good variety too.

4 **Top Gun: Hard Lock**
HEADSTRONG GAMES
Limp and aimless. A trap laced with nostalgia that goes into a flat spin quickly.

THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. Yes, we're totally serious.



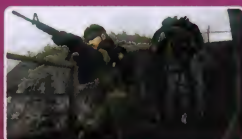
MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates.



WIPEOUT PULSE
DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL
PLAYERS: 1-8

Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER
DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
PLAYERS: 1-6

A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*; this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA
DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
PLAYERS: 1

Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-Hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

MUSIC

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack 7
HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff, but fully exportable.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band 9
HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Some great improvements and excellent mixes.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band 8
HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Guitar Hero 5 7
NEVERSOFT
The last in the series with a dud tracklist.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica 8
NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock 7
NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it's missed the mark.

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 4 8
UBISOFT
As much fun and just as silly as the last installment.

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 4 8
UBISOFT
As silly and fun as the last instalment.

LEGO Rock Band 8
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

PixelJunk 4am 5
Q GAMES
Move controls are poorly implemented. A pity.

RECOMMENDED Retro/Grade 8
24 CARET GAMES
A shooter-cum-rhythm game that's loaded with lasers.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3 9
HARMONIX
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

Rock Band Blitz 7
HARMONIX
Once again an extensive library will ensure you enjoy this.

RECOMMENDED Rocksmith 8
UBISOFT
More an educational tool than game, but it works really, really well.

SingStar 8
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY

Ape Escape 4
JAPAN STUDIO
A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.

EyePet 7
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Kung Fu Rider 3
JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-tastic. A terrible Move game.

PlayStation Move Heroes 7
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

NEW Sports Champions 2 6
ZINDAGI GAMES
The original was a must-have. This isn't.

Start the Party! Save the World! 5
SUPERMASSIVE GAMES
A Move game for the very young.

Yoostar 2 7
BLITZ GAME STUDIOS
Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

Babel Rising 6
MANDO PRODUCTIONS
This tower-defence god-game has a spirited concept but winds up being soulless.

ESSENTIAL Braid 10
HOTHEAD GAMES
Probably the best-ever example of how to implement time-bending physics.

RECOMMENDED Catherine 8
ATLUS
Niche and weird in places, but compelling.

RECOMMENDED Chime 8
ZÔE MODE
A music-based puzzler where you need to slot in blocks to rockin' (and chilled) beats.

RECOMMENDED de Blob 2 9
BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT
Surprisingly fun, fresh and colourful. Get it if you can: Blue Tongue no longer exist.

NEW Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two 6
JUNCTION POINT STUDIOS
Way better with Move and with two players, but it's a bit tricky for young 'uns.

RECOMMENDED Flight Control 9
FIREMINT
One of the best Move games ever.

Hell Yeah! Wrath of the Dead Rabbit 7
ARKEDO
A fun cartoon journey packed with blood.

RECOMMENDED Jak & Daxter Trilogy 9
SONY
PS2 mascots prove they are evergreen. A truly fine HD makeover.

RECOMMENDED Joe Danger 2 8
HELLO GAMES
A platformer-puzzler with bundles of charm.

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Joyful, though the series is showing its age.



LittleBigPlanet 2 9
DEVELOPER: MEDIA MOLECULE PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-4

"A truly charming platformer. Incredibly innovative and never-ending; you could sink a lifetime into creating anything you want for this and never be done."

NIGHTS into Dreams HD 6
SEGA (SHANGHAI) SOFTWARE
A game from yesterday riddled with cracks.

RECOMMENDED Outland 9
HOUSEMARQUE
Liberally copies bits from old-school *Castlevania* but it does it well. Very clever.

Papo & Yo 7
MINORITY
Deep, affecting subject, but predictable and simple. Not cheap, either.

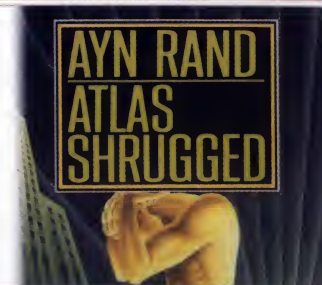
RECOMMENDED Quantum Conundrum 8
AIR TIGHT GAMES
If you're expecting more *Portal*, stop. Very cool ideas marred by frustrating platforming.

RECOMMENDED The Ratchet & Clank Trilogy 9
INSOMNIAC/IDOLMINDS
Excellent value for money and still refined.

Rock of Ages 6
ACE TEAM
A very weird. Terry Gilliam-inspired mash of tower defence and platforming.

Get booked

Movies based on books are common. Games based on books – that's not so common. Sure, there's *The Testament of Sherlock Holmes* which is more Arthur Conan Doyle than Robert Downey Jr, but that doesn't follow a particular plot. The most famous is *BioShock* which is inspired by Ayn Rand's philosophies, notably from her book *Atlas Shrugged*, in which the masters of production decide to live on the bottom of the ocean because they don't like to pay tax. Spoiler: didn't end well.



RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins 8
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Utterly gorgeous. Truly great with friends.

RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

RECOMMENDED Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode II 8
SEGA
Better than *Episode I* with tweaked physics. Also includes Tails, and he's actually useful.

Sonic CD 6
SEGA
Old-school Sonic stars in a beautiful port, but the game is a pig to play. Cheap-as, though.

Sonic Generations 7
SONIC TEAM
Starts out great and falters towards the end.

RECOMMENDED Sound Shapes 8
QUEASY GAMES
A music-based romp that embraces user-generated content. On Vita, too. Very good.

The Unfinished Swan 7
GIANT SPARROW
Short, but beautiful and endearing. You'll need a Move controller, though.

RECOMMENDED Trine 2 8
FROZENBYTE
Puzzles and platforming wrapped up with gorgeous three-player arcade action.

Wizorb 7
TRIBUTE GAMES
A modern take on *Arkanoid* with magic and special powers. Dirt cheap. Great on Vita!

RACING/DRIVING

Blur 7
BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise 9
CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

RECOMMENDED Daytona USA 8
SEGA
Addictive as ever and beyond arcade-perfect.

RECOMMENDED Dirt 3 8
CODEMASTERS
A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound.

Dirt Showdown 7
CODEMASTERS RACING
Flamboyance without substance and dumbed-down handling. Gymkhana rules.

RECOMMENDED Driver: San Francisco 9
REFLECTIONS
The series returns to its roots and delivers superb action-adventure racing. A must get.

RECOMMENDED Dyad 8
J1
A seizure-inducing, music-based blaster.

RECOMMENDED F1 2012 9
CODEMASTERS
Has more variety and toe-in-the-water moments. Weird flag rules, though.

NEW F1 Race Stars 6
CODEMASTERS RACING
Frustrating kart racer. No drifting, either.



Gran Turismo Sport 9
DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16

"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

NEW RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet Karting 8
UNITED FRONT GAMES
Easier than *ModNation* but more loaded with opportunity to create. Lots of fun.

Mad Riders 7
TECHLAND
Cheap ATV thrills in a crowded market.

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers 9
UNITED FRONT GAMES
Creating is even more fun than racing.

MotoGP 10/11 6
MONUMENTAL GAMES
Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Boasts splitscreen but feels old.

MotorStorm Apocalypse 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

MX vs. ATV Alive 5
RAINBOW STUDIOS
A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since.

MUD - FIM Motocross World Championship 6
BLACK BEAN GAMES
No-frills motocross racing.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 9
CRITERION GAMES
Smooth and truly beautiful arcade racing.

NEW RECOMMENDED Need For Speed Most Wanted 8
CRITERION
A fantastic open-world racer that needs to be online. Great multiplayer too.

Nail'd 7
TECHLAND
Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID 9
CODEMASTERS
A born-to-rage racing rebel. A bit old, but the only other racer to have Mount Panorama.

Ridge Racer Unbounded 6
BUGBEAR ENTERTAINMENT
Woeful drifting, infuriating track design. Pity.

SBK Generations 7
MILESTONE
Fairly similar to 2011 and X. Technical and lovely but it's comparatively ugly.

RECOMMENDED **SHIFT 2: Unleashed** 9
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Features Mount Panorama.

RECOMMENDED **Split/Second** 8
BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Challenges *Burnout* but needed to be sharper.

Test Drive Unlimited 2 7
EDEN GAMES
Bold, but the cars handle like go-karts in glue.

RECOMMENDED **WRC 2** 7
MILESTONE
Better than last year's but rough.

Wrecked: Revenge Revisited 7
SUPERSONIC SOFTWARE
Absolute must-have for local-multi.

RPG/ACTION RPG

Alpha Protocol 5
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution.

RECOMMENDED **Disgaea 4: A Promise Unforgotten** 8
NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE
Very familiar for fans but still exciting.

RECOMMENDED **Dark Souls** 8
FROM SOFTWARE
Brutally, stupidly, gloriously hard.

RECOMMENDED **Darksiders II** 9
VIGIL GAMES
Slicker, tougher and deeper than the first.

Dungeon Siege III 6
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Sluggish combat and arse-backwards.

RECOMMENDED **Dragon Age: Origins** 9
BIOWARE
As long as it is enthralling.

RECOMMENDED **Dragon Age II** 8
BIOWARE
One step forward and two steps back.

RECOMMENDED **Dragon's Dogma** 8
CAPCOM
A challenging and punishing action-RPG where 'action' isn't an afterthought.

ESSENTIAL **The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim** 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
Book holidays; you will need 300+ hours to discover everything this offers.

ESSENTIAL **Fallout 3** 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
It's *Oblivion* in a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

RECOMMENDED **Fallout: New Vegas** 8
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

RECOMMENDED **Final Fantasy XIII-2** 8
SQUARE ENIX
Better, more freedom but still clunky in places.

Hyperdimension Neptunia Mk2 5
IDEA FACTORY
A truly unnecessary sequel.

RECOMMENDED **Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning** 8
38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGE GAMES
A patchwork of everything that's great.

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North 7
SNOWBLIND STUDIOS
Repetitive combat. Best in co-op.

ESSENTIAL **Mass Effect 2** 10
BIOWARE
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi.

ESSENTIAL **Mass Effect 3** 10
BIOWARE
One-ups its impressive predecessor.

Mugen Souls 6
COMPILE HEART
An uninspired JRPG with a dirty sense of humour. Technically woeful, too.

NEW **Of Orcs and Men** 7
CYANIDE
Unrefined but a bloody good effort compared to their *A Game of Thrones* cash-in.

Exit planet, dust



Stardust: it's serious stuff, not just something for you to blast in a twin-stick shooter. Stardust is a type of cosmic dust, but it's also a gas that cooled and condensed as it left presolar stars, and is found within meteorites. Depending on how the stardust formed, it's possible to find out which star it's derived from. All the stardust that exists was formed before the planet earth came into being over 4 billion years ago.

Rainbow Moon 5
SIDEQUEST STUDIOS
Bland-as-batshit characters and dull combat.

R.A.W. - Realms of Ancient War 4
WIZARBOX
Rough and flavourless. Waves its fingers at RPG conventions and pays for it.

Risen 2 5
DEEP SILVER
A mess. Send it down to Davy Jones' Locker.

Tales of Graces f 7
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Saccharine, yet enticing. Looks lovely.

Valkyria Chronicles 8
SEGA WDW
Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

Way of the Samurai 4 6
ACQUIRE
Wacky and weird. Japanophiles will dig it.

Yakuza: Dead Souls 8
SEGA
Sluggish and dated, like a zombie wearing flares.

SHOOTER

NEW **007 Legends** 3
EUROCOM
An incomprehensibly awful Bond game and a really shoddy shooter in general.

Aliens vs. Predator 9
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever.

RECOMMENDED **Battlefield 3** 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Single player blows, multiplayer's awesome.

RECOMMENDED **Battlefield: Bad Company 2** 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A deeply dedicated online community but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED **BioShock** 8
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN
Grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED **BioShock 2** 9
2K MARIN / DIGITALEXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spliced to near-perfection.



Borderlands 2 9
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K PLAYERS: 1 - 4
"Wild, clever and overflowing with clever nods and moments. More cohesive than its predecessor and addictive too, with loads of DLC you'll want to care about incoming. Rewards multiple playthroughs, especially in co-op."

Brink 7
SPLASH DAMAGE
Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

RECOMMENDED **Brother's in Arms: Hell's Highway** 8
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.

Bulletstorm 7
PEOPLE CAN FLY
Inventive but is best towards the end.

ESSENTIAL **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3** 9
INFINITY WARD
It realised the threat presented by *Battlefield 3* and sees it off. Refined and addictive.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **Call of Duty: Black Ops II** 9
TREYARCH
Reinvents the multiplayer formula and has the best solo campaign out of all *CoDs*.

Call of Juarez: The Cartel 4
TECHLAND
Hackneyed ideas with AI from the last century.

RECOMMENDED **The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena** 8
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS
Moody and fresh. A must play.

RECOMMENDED **Counter-Strike: Global Offensive** 8
VALVE
The game from your misspent youth.

RECOMMENDED **Crysis** 8
CRYTEK
Forget it's from 2007 and realise it's stellar.

RECOMMENDED **Crysis 2** 9
CRYTEK
Diabolically pretty and challenging, and a welcome reprieve from corridor shooters.

RECOMMENDED **The Darkness II** 8
DIGITAL EXTREMES
Gory, inventive, and fun, but pretty short. You need to play co-op for the full story, too.

RECOMMENDED **Deus Ex: Human Revolution** 8
EIDOS MONTREAL
A flawed masterpiece that doesn't offer quite as much choice as you'd like.

RECOMMENDED **Dishonored** 8
ARKANE STUDIOS
Irregularly paced and anti-climatic, but otherwise a bloody good romp.

NEW **DOOM 3 BFG Edition** 6
ID
It hasn't aged well. A relic with cobwebs.

F.E.A.R. 3 6
DAY 1 STUDIOS
Capable but unspectacular. Also, not scary.

RECOMMENDED **Far Cry 2** 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A bit clunky now. Still clever and poignant.

RECOMMENDED **Ghost Recon: Future Soldier** 8
UBISOFT PARIS
Another mil-sim but with beautiful tech and pacing. Brilliant, purchase-worthy, co-op.

RECOMMENDED **Killzone 3** 9
GUERRILLA GAMES
Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline.

NEW **Medal of Honor: Warfighter** 5
DANGER CLOSE
Old hat. Buggy solo, and lacklustre multi.

RECOMMENDED **Mirror's Edge** 8
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A true original and smartly designed.

RECOMMENDED **Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath** 8
JUST ADD WATER
A fun mish-mash of platforming and shooting.

RECOMMENDED **Operation Flashpoint: Red River** 8
CODEMASTERS
Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

RECOMMENDED **The Orange Box** 9
EA UK / VALVE
Get it for *Portal*, keep it for *Half-Life 2*.

RECOMMENDED **Portal 2** 9
VALVE
One of the most brilliant games, ever.

RAGE 7
ID
Holds promise but the world feels empty.

RECOMMENDED **Resistance 3** 8
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Derivative action but effortlessly compelling.

Rogue Warrior 3
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
A fiasco. The best bit is the end credits.

RECOMMENDED **Syndicate** 9
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Stylish, and bountiful in co-op. Banned in Aus.

RECOMMENDED **Twisted Metal** 8
EAT SLEEP PLAY
Fast, refreshing and tactical. Great online.

SPORTS

AFL Live 6
BIG ANT
Does a decent job of things – just.



FIFA 13 9
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22
"Inches closer and closer to the real thing. First Touch Controls are game- and genre-changing, and there's a very healthy and complex online component too."

RECOMMENDED **FIFA Street** 6
EA CANADA
Attacking feels good but defending will make you cry. Needs more fun in the next update.

RECOMMENDED **Fight Night Champion** 9
EA CANADA
Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

London 2012 6
SEGA STUDIOS AUSTRALIA
Waggle- and mash-tacular! Better in multi.

RECOMMENDED **Madden NFL 13** 8
EA TIBURON
Dodgy physics aside, this is the best the series has been.

RECOMMENDED **NBA 2K13** 9
VISUAL CONCEPTS
One of NBA's finest moments yet.

RECOMMENDED **NBA Jam: On Fire Edition** 8
EA CANADA
Loads of fun. For \$20 you're mad not to get it.

RECOMMENDED **Pro Evolution Soccer 2013** 8
KONAMI
Does lots of things differently to *FIFA* and it's doing them bloody well.

Rugby League Live 2 6
BIG ANT STUDIOS
Fixes some of *Live*'s problems but it feels crude. For die-hards only.

- RECOMMENDED Skate 3** 8
EA BLACK BOX
Better in many ways, though we'd stick with the madness of *Skate 2*.
- SSX** 7
EA CANADA
Labyrinthine courses mean plenty to do, but you might get lost on the way.
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13** 7
EA TIBURON
Great golf game but you'll always need to be online to truly progress. Got 12? Stick with it.
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD** 6
ROBOMODO
Skimpy. Lacks content and no splitscreen.
- RECOMMENDED Top Spin 4** 8
2K CZECH
Still the best tennis sim with a DualShock.
- RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 3** 9
YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS
If you 'get' the sport you need this.
- RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4** 8
SUMO DIGITAL
Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.

STRATEGY

- RECOMMENDED Anomaly Warzone Earth** 8
11 BIT STUDIOS
Tower offence and it's excellent. Also, co-op.
- Awesomenauts** 7
RONIMO GAMES
There's no such thing as a quick game in this MOBA. A real slog at times.
- RECOMMENDED From Dust** 9
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Creative and engaging god-game.
- Worms Revolution** 7
TEAM 17
Genuine new ideas but feels a little muddled.
- RECOMMENDED XCOM: Enemy Unknown** 8
FIRAXIS GAMES
Fantastic concept and very engrossing.

PS VITA

- RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed III Liberation** 9
UBISOFT SOFIA
A must play, and a system seller.
- Dynasty Warriors Next** 6
TECMO KOEI
Mindless hack 'n' slash.
- Escape Plan** 6
FUN BITS INTERACTIVE
Clever ideas but feels like a gimmick at times.
- RECOMMENDED Floating Cloud God Saves the Pilgrims** 8
DAKKO DAKKO
A thoroughly charming sidescrolling shooter.
- RECOMMENDED Everybody's Golf** 8
CLAP HANZ
Excellent physics. Even though it's puke-worthy cute, you won't be disappointed.
- F1 2011** 6
SUMO DIGITAL
Ugly, boring, and tragic AI.
- RECOMMENDED FIFA Football** 9
EA
FIFA 12, tweaked, and in your hands. Superb.
- RECOMMENDED Gravity Rush** 9
JAPAN STUDIO
Gravity-bending free-roaming action with a few RPG elements tossed in. Very stylish.
- LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7** 5
TRAVELER'S TALES
Lacklustre touchscreen controls, no co-op.
- LittleBigPlanet PS Vita** 7
DOUBLE ELEVEN
It's *LBP* as you know it (good!), but the touchscreen stuff gets in the way (bad!).

- RECOMMENDED Lumines: Electronic Symphony** 8
Q ENTERTAINMENT
Hypnotic and addictive music-based puzzler with new twists. Must get.
- RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD Collection** 8
KONAMI/BLUEPOINT GAMES
A so-so port of excellent games.
- Modnation Racers: Road Trip** 7
SONY SAN DIEGO
Much to do and create but no online multi.
- RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat** 8
NETHERREALM
NZ only, which is a shame because like the PS3 version it's guilty, bloody, fun.
- RECOMMENDED MotorStorm RC** 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Holy hamburgers, this is addictive stuff.
- NEW RECOMMENDED Need For Speed Most Wanted** 8
EA
Very similar to its big brother. The best racer on PS Vita by far.
- New Little King's Story** 6
MINDSCAPE
Lacking polish, but not technical issues.
- RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins** 9
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Utterly gorgeous platformer. Solo play only.
- Reality Fighters** 6
NOVARAMA
Cool idea but the biff is simplistic.
- RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins** 8
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Utterly gorgeous platformer. Solo play only.
- Resistance: Burning Skies** 5
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
Boring, with dumb AI and poor presentation.
- Ridge Racer Vita** 4
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Hollow and worthless. A shell of a game.
- Shinobido 2: Revenge of Zen** 6
ACQUIRE
Technical issues and a weird camera system tarnishes a cool action game.
- Sixty Second Shooter Deluxe** 7
HAPPION LABORATORIES
Twin stick blaster for the time poor.
- RECOMMENDED Street Fighter X Tekken** 9
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
A perfect rendition of the PS3 version.
- Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz** 7
AMUSEMENT VISION
A solid entry that harkens back to its brutal.
- RECOMMENDED Super Stardust Delta** 9
HOUSEMARQUE
Cheap. Fun. Ridiculously pretty. Must get.
- RECOMMENDED Tales From Space: Mutant Blobs Attack!** 8
DRINKBOX STUDIOS
A really clever platformer.
- Touch My Katamari** 5
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Disappointing. Bereft of the usual charm.
- RECOMMENDED Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3** 9
CAPCOM
Accessible to everyone and very pretty.
- Unit 13** 6
ZIPPERINTERACTIVE
Bland objectives and old-hat level design.
- Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour** 8
SEGA
It's the PS3 game, but on Vita.
- RECOMMENDED WipEout 2048** 8
STUDIO LIVERPOOL
A very pretty robust racer; true to the series.
- NEW RECOMMENDED Zero Escape: Virtue's Last Reward** 8
SPIKE CHUNSOFT
A sort of choose your own adventure that's superbly written.

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

1997
Oddworld: Abe's OddyseeCONSOLE: PSX GENRE: PLATFORMER DEVELOPER: ODDWORLD INHABITANTS
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: US CURRENT PRICE: \$8.45 (PSN) \$20 - \$150 (EBAY)

The only thing you really need to know about *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* is that it had a dedicated fart button. Thanks for reading. You want more? Consider the mind-boggling reality that some opportunistic gamers are attempting to sell used copies of the apparently "rare" title for as much as \$150 on eBay and old, odd Abe quickly sets himself apart as an old-school character that's well worth (re)visiting.

In fact, such is Abe's street cred that the PS3 and Vita are receiving a Just Add Water-forged New 'N' Tasty HD facelift. To be fair, the 2D platformer's graphics, rendered in 3D programs, were one of *Oddworld's* most attractive facets as players jumped into the homemade skivvies of titular Abe: an alien slave at RaptureFarms meat-processing factory, who's a First Class floor-waxer and also Employee of the Year. Unfortunately for Abe and his Mudokon people, they're slated to be turned into the next range of snacks, "Mudokon Pops!", thanks to the sales decline of Scrab Cakes, Paramite Pies and Meech Munchies, which is because of the species decline of the creatures that go into those tasty treats. Cause and effect.

The cigar-loving and allegedly attractive Molluck the Glukkon isn't about to let his unpaid Mudokon workforce know that their goose is about to be cooked. For a 2D side-scrolling platformer – hardly a novel concept for 1997 – *Oddworld* is teeming with personality. Despite being the only Mudokon to have his mouth sewn shut, Abe is mysteriously able and actively required to communicate with his enslaved

buddies to free them from captivity via magic bird portals. These portals are activated by Abe's hypnotic chanting ability; a skill that's best used against the myriad weak-minded Slig opponents to possess their bodies for full mental remote control.

Rescuing at least 50 of Abe's fellow Mudokons grants the canonised good ending. While this is an implicit goal for any persistent gamer, the biggest challenge was stopping yourself from killing your fellow Mudokons. Dispatching them in various gruesome ways was often too funny to resist. Hell, even killing Abe by running him into traps, throwing him off edges or zapping him into atoms was sometimes worth being zapped back to the not-so-nearest checkpoint.

Then again, if it's serious gameplay you were looking for, Abe's Oddysee had it in spades, with the kind of challenging puzzles that made *Limbo* look like a stroll through a monochrome park. Sure, earlier puzzles were straightforward enough, but later brainteasers involved multiple screens, required clever wits and, often, perfect timing to best them.

While some of the puzzles were more annoying that Microsoft Word's insistent judgemental suggested corrections of the titular words "Oddworld" and "Oddyssey" (they're puns, dammit!), Abe's comedic heart of gold was what stayed one's hand from snapping a controller.

Failing that, you could always praise, scold or even strike your fellow Mudokons to abate rage-quitting and, in your least finest hour, there was the always-hilarious tiptoeing past Sligs, running Abe into walls to make him scold you and, of course, the fart button. Farts were, are and always will be classic.

Nathan Lawrence

AGAINST THE ODDS

Lorne Lanning, the creator of the *Oddworld* universe and (voice of) Abe, founded *Oddworld Inhabitants* with Sherry McKenna in 1994. Lanning is a perfectionist. While the *Oddworld* series of games has earned critical and cult acclaim, Lanning directed just four games to completion before shuttering the studio in 2005. He returned in 2008 to start work on more games for *Oddworld*.

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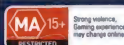


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